



Committee: Environment & Transportation

Testimony on: HB161-Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority Sunset Act

Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing

Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 8, 2023

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorable with amendments on HB161.

The Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority (Waste Disposal Authority) is a quasi-governmental agency. In 2021, the bipartisan State Transparency and Accountability Reform Commission (Commission) reviewed the operations and structures of quasi-governmental agencies in Maryland, including the Waste Disposal Authority. The Commission recommended that all quasi-governmental agencies receive a periodic sunset review, and specifically named the Waste Disposal Authority.

HB161 directs the Department of Legislative Services to conduct an independent evaluation of the Waste Disposal Authority and the potential for sunseting it. In addition, the bill prohibits the Waste Disposal Authority from issuing bonds and requires the Maryland Environmental Service (MES) and the Maryland Clean Energy Center (MCEC) to review the Waste Disposal Authority and analyze whether MES or the MCEC would be able to assume the Waste Disposal Authority's responsibilities.

Montgomery County's experience with the Waste Disposal Authority illustrates its shortcomings regarding transitioning to sustainable solid waste policies without incineration. When Montgomery County asked the Waste Management Authority to provide technical support for a zero waste plan, they relied upon a list of pre-approved consultants, rather than an open request for proposals. The Waste Management Authority engaged an engineering firm biased toward waste-to-energy and landfill solutions. The County Executive subsequently had to procure the services of nationally recognized zero waste consultant to get a more comprehensive perspective on for the County's plan.

In order to move to a zero-waste approach to waste management, Maryland needs to free itself from the biases of the Waste Management Authority. We ask that you vote FAVORABLE for HB161.