

Maryland should Stop Subsidizing Trash Incineration



Burning trash is not clean energy: to produce the same amount of energy, trash incinerators emit more greenhouse gasses than coal plants do. Air pollutants from waste incinerators have also shown to increase the risk of pre-term births, and lung and blood cancers; an Environmental Integrity Project assessment shows that Maryland's incinerators emit higher levels of mercury, lead, nitrogen oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), and carbon dioxide (CO₂) than our coal plants. But in 2011, Maryland put trash incineration into our Renewable Portfolio Standard, a program meant to support clean energy sources and facilitate a transition away from fossil fuels. Since then, the BRESCO trash incinerator in Baltimore has received over \$10 million in subsidies, as well as the Covanta-operated incinerators in Montgomery County and Lorton, VA – all from your utility bill.

In the 2019 legislative session, several pieces of legislation aimed to remove trash incineration from the Renewable Portfolio Standard so that subsidies currently being thrown away on incineration would support clean, renewable energy instead. On March 20, the Senate passed a version of the Clean Energy Jobs Act that included this language – but the House chose to delete that language, and the final legislation allows trash incineration to remain in the subsidized 'renewable energy' category. The end result is that Maryland will continue throwing away increased clean energy subsidies on trash incineration, a polluting and carbon-intensive energy source.

In 2020, support these bills to stop subsidizing trash incineration:

- Remove trash incineration from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard
- Prevent toxic incinerator ash from counting toward recycling rates when it's used as cover on Maryland landfills

To learn more and get involved:

www.cleanwater.org/ZeroWasteMD



From Trash Incineration to Zero Waste

Burning and burying our waste are not the only options. Frederick and Carroll County entered into agreements to build a new trash incinerator a decade ago – but then both counties said no! All across Maryland, local governments, communities, and groups are working towards Zero Waste: a future where recycling, composting, re-use, and source reduction can eliminate the need to burn or bury so much waste. Composting Maryland’s organic waste could reduce our waste stream by half, and composting can actually turn a profit for municipalities, unlike incineration, landfilling, or even most forms of recycling. It provides a market for local business: we can responsibly dispose of our waste and generate a usable product on the other end. As an added benefit, compost sequesters carbon and builds healthy soils. Composting even creates jobs: composting a ton of waste in Maryland employs twice as many people as landfilling it, and four times as many people as incinerating it. And there is room for the sector to grow.

With a pilot program to compost in 3 schools last year, **Frederick County** found that as much as 87% of the school’s trash could be diverted through composting, recycling, and diverting liquids - and this year, they’ve expanded that initiative to 14 schools. At Urbana Sugarloaf Elementary School, the Frederick Compost Working Group found that 87% of the school’s trash could be diverted from the landfill. **Harford County** schools are diverting organic waste at 10 schools.

Communities in **Montgomery County** and **Howard County** are piloting curbside compost pickup programs for household waste.

The **Baltimore City** Office of Sustainability’s 2014 report, “Waste to Wealth: Baltimore Waste Stream Analysis,” 82 percent of Baltimore’s household materials could be recycled or composted.

Prince George’s County’s Waste Characterization Study determined that 77% of its landfilled waste could be composted, recycled or diverted. Already, the County boasts the highest waste diversion rate in Maryland is home to the East Coast’s largest composting facility, which generates profits for the County.

| Urbana Sugarloaf Elementary School Waste Separation Data for First 15 days & Extrapolated for Full School Year | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| BEFORE SORT | First 15 Days | Percent | All lunches per year (180 days) | Where it goes! |
| TRASH | 3,047.7 lbs. | 100% | 36,572 lbs. | Landfilled |
| AFTER SORT | | | | |
| Liquids | 752.2 lbs. | 24.7% | 9,026 lbs. | Poured down drain |
| Compostable Food Waste | 1,635.0 lbs | 53.6% | 19,620 lbs. | Composted by Key Compost |
| Recyclables | 289.5 lbs. | 9.5% | 3,474 lbs. | Recycled |
| TRASH | 370.5 lbs. | 12.2% | 4,446 lbs. | Landfilled |

Landfilled Trash Reduced by 87.8 Percent!



In 2020, support these bills to call for composting in Maryland:

- Require large food waste producers (restaurants, schools, cafeterias) to send their organic waste to compost facilities where those facilities are available
- Encourage regenerative agriculture practices that involve composting organic waste on farms and applying compost to soils

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