



Maryland Chapter
P.O Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB 161 – “Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority – Evaluation and Termination of Bond Authority”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 8, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 161. This bill would prohibit the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority (NMWDA) from issuing bonds as of June 1, 2023. It would require the Department of Legislative Services to evaluate the performance of the Authority and the impact of merging it with the Maryland Environmental Service (MES) or other appropriate entity, on or before December 1, 2024. The evaluation would include an assessment of whether MES and the Clean Energy Center could take on the Authority’s current projects.

According to the bill’s preamble, the NMWDA was created by the General Assembly in 1980 to coordinate and finance participating subdivisions of the State (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Frederick, Harford, Howard, and Montgomery Counties and the City of Baltimore), in addition to public entities and the private sector “in the provision of adequate waste disposal facilities, including facilities that provide for energy generation and resource recovery and facilities that generate steam, electricity, or other forms of energy from fuels derived from or otherwise related to waste disposal facilities.”

Since then, the Maryland Clean Energy Center was created in 2008 to encourage development of clean energy industries and technologies in the State; the Harford County waste-to-energy incinerator has closed; Montgomery County has signaled its intention close its incinerator in April 2026; and contracts with the Baltimore City incinerator by the City and Baltimore County will be expiring within the next eight years.

Given this situation and that when the NMWDA was formed, the General Assembly anticipated that at some future time the Authority could merge with the MES, the proposed evaluation is timely and appropriate. It will inform the decision concerning a merger with MES, while also providing useful lessons about the effectiveness and performance of the NMWDA that will be useful going forward.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on HB 161.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.