

Council President Kate Stewart  
Councilmembers  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20815



June 16, 2025

**Testimony on: Expedited Bill 15-25, Special Capital Improvements  
Projects - New Organics Processing Facility**

Position: Support

Dear Council President Stewart and Councilmembers,

Zero Waste Montgomery County is a dedicated group of local residents who have been advocating for Zero Waste programs and closing of the incinerator in Montgomery County.

We support the Expedited Bill 15-25, Special Capital Improvements Projects - New Organics Processing Facility - that would authorize the planning, design, and construction of the New Organics Processing Facility project in the Little Monocacy Basin Dickerson-Barnesville area.

We support the Bill as the next step to improve waste management services in Montgomery County. First, it will be cost-efficient to establish the food scrap composting facility at the yard trim facility where the infrastructure already exists to begin an expansion. According to EA Engineering, the consulting firm that the county executive hired a couple of years ago, it would cost an additional

\$60 million to build a composting facility at “Site 2”. As we’ve stated many times, the Sugarloaf Citizens Association is ready to negotiate the composting of food scraps at yard trim facility, so it’s surprising to see that the County Executive or Department of Environmental Protection have not yet finalized the agreement with the SCA.

Second, it will be reasonable to implement mandatory food scraps composting programs for all the residents in Montgomery County, including the multi-family properties, in order to reduce waste around 20% as soon as possible. As the county DEP case studies at The Blairs, Friends House Retirement Community, Riderwood Village, and Rock Creek Village<sup>1</sup> have shown, it is possible to establish successful food scraps recycling programs and divert tons of waste every year. A countywide mandatory food scraps recycling program will maximize the amount of waste being diverted which reduces the amount of waste being incinerated, or possibly sent to a landfill in the future.

Lastly, the County needs to take action to close the incinerator as soon as possible. How will the County Council show initiative to lead the County in the right direction and ensure that there are no more delays? We need your leadership to ensure we are not spending unnecessary funds on our waste management. The unexpected maintenance cost of \$28M for the Resource Recovery Facility, or trash incinerator, managed by ReWorld (formerly Covanta), was approved by the County Council for FY26 budget and the DEP has mentioned the need for future maintenance expenses. If the County Executive and the DEP had started with their preparations to close the incinerator, as they promised in 2021<sup>2</sup> then the Council would not be forced to cover unexpected maintenance costs of \$28M in 2026. All the council members agree that there are better ways to spend our tax dollars. And to save money, we need to stop burning our trash, polluting our community and the public air, and pivot to using a landfill as soon as possible, that has been vetted with environmental justice criteria. We also want to register that we agree with Council President Kate Stewart’s request to the DEP to provide monthly updates on the progress to close the incinerator and we look forward to hearing more on this topic regularly.

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<sup>1</sup> Montgomery County DEP case studies

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dep/Resources/Files/store/trrac/food-scrap-case-studies.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum, December 2021 <https://www.energyjustice.net/md/2021-12-03letter.pdf>

Once again, we strongly urge you to pass this Bill. Implementing the food scraps composting program in our County, making it mandatory for all residents, including the multi-family properties is crucial to reducing waste and therefore creating a safe, healthy, livable neighborhood and future for all the residents in our County, including Dickerson, near the current trash incinerator. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Eisendrath  
Elisabeth Liisi Fidler  
Elad Firnberg  
Daniela Ochoa Gonzalez  
Carrie Maslen

Zero Waste Montgomery County  
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