

Testimony On: **FY25 Solid Waste Service Charges**
Organization: **Zero Waste Montgomery County**

Date: **April 9, 2024**



Honorable Council President, Vice-President, and Councilmembers,

My name is Amy Maron and I have been a waste reduction and recycling advocate in the County since 2018.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Zero Waste Montgomery County, a group of concerned citizens working to end waste incineration and increase waste diversion and recycling.

We support the approval of the solid waste charges for Fiscal Year 2025. However, we believe that the County needs to begin the transition toward adopting the multiple waste reduction strategies outlined in the “Enhanced Plan of Action” in Chapter 5 of the Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan already approved by the County Council.

Specifically, we want to see the County convert over to a state-of-the-art method of paying for solid waste services that better incentivizes residents to reduce waste and recycle more. This method, called “Save as you Throw” was first recommended by the County’s *Aiming for Zero Waste* Task Force as well as by the Solid Waste Advisory Committee a few years ago. Save-as-you-throw is an evidence-based system that has been successfully used in hundreds of communities of all sizes across the country.

To find out how a Save-as-you-throw system would work, in 2023 the County received a comprehensive report prepared by Skumatz Economic Research Associates, or SERA. SERA provided a detailed implementation plan. It also recommended harmonizing this new unit-based payment system across the county by combining the two trash collection Subdistricts known as A (mostly downcounty) and B (mostly upcounty) to a county-managed collection system. Currently, the county manages trash collection only in Subdistrict A. SERA also recommended starting with a small pilot program, which would be combined with outreach and education, to gauge changes in waste generation

and recycling before implementing the system county-wide. Low-income households could be offered waste discounts to minimize their economic burden.

SERA estimated that converting to this new system would result in more than 16,000 additional tons of recycling and 610 additional tons of yard trim set out annually. It would also result in 13,000 additional tons of waste reduction, as well as the reduction of 49,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

Adopting a “save as you throw” waste system – along with curbside food scraps separation and composting – for the residential sector will help Montgomery County get closer to its laudable goal of aiming for zero waste.

Thank you for considering our comments.