

Written Testimony for the Montgomery County Council

Re: Montgomery County's Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget

Date: April 9, 2026

I live in Dickerson, MD and I attend DAFIG board meetings where I am now a voting member as a resident of the affected area. I have a strong interest in how technology can shape the future of waste management. I'd like to offer a perspective on waste and toxicity.

There can be little doubt that the future of waste management will be shaped by automated sorting technologies. These technologies can have a huge impact on how toxic our waste is.

A common approach to waste management is to focus on total weight. The percentage of waste diverted to recycling is often measured by weight. Weight is useful, but it can miss something important. Not all waste is equal. A small portion of the waste stream can carry most of the toxicity. Electronics may only be a few percent of total waste by weight, but they can account for a high percentage of the risk. The same is true for certain chlorinated plastics that can create highly toxic pollution if burned.

If the county decides to send our trash elsewhere, we are not helpless. We can and should continue to take responsibility for reducing risk. This is where these new technologies can have the most impact. Removing a small percentage of waste can eliminate most of the toxicity.

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