

Dear County Council,

I am writing to urge you to approve the portion of the County Executive's FY2027 budget that would close the Montgomery County trash incinerator by the end of this year and shift to a safer waste disposal system for the entire county.

As a citizen with COPD who lives in Barnesville, MD, several miles from the incinerator, I urge you to close the incinerator and thereby dramatically reduce the harmful emissions that are being put in our air and the risk of greater contamination due to future breakdowns at the facility, not to mention the two large air quality violations that have already occurred this year. It will also end the shameful 30-year practice of dumping the toxic ash the incinerator produces (after burning) on a minority community in Virginia.

While I understand that this is a complex undertaking and that the Council deserves as much transparency as possible to make a budget decision, in my view, DEP and the Elrich administration have provided the Council with enough information to accept the plan, pass the budget, and get this transition underway. Let's not continue to stall and study while damaging air pollution is released and toxic ash produced.

An independent analysis has found that the overall cost of waste management in this budget cycle (FY2027) will rise modestly no matter which path is chosen. But that cost will be roughly the same with both paths. The difference is that the transition to landfilling and a "zero waste" strategy will build towards the future while sticking with the incinerator will require pouring millions of dollars into it with increasingly uncertain outcomes as the facility continues to age and present risks.

Using a landfill will create incentives for us to improve and expand our recycling efforts and further solve our waste challenges, while saving money and improving the quality of our environment.

It's time for the county council to take a leadership position and show other counties how to wean themselves off of damaging incinerators. The County Executive's FY2027 budget (for July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027) includes a transition to landfilling and closing the incinerator by the end of 2026 / beginning of 2027. Please support this part of the budget. Please do not fall victim to inertia and delay this any longer. Any further delay in transitioning away from burning our garbage is not in the best interests of County residents.

Thank you for your time,

Joyce Bailey