



February 27, 2024

To: Maryland House Economic Matters Committee

Re: HB468 Commission to Advance Lithium-Ion Battery Safety In Maryland

I'm Kitty McIlroy, President of Maryland Recycling Network (MRN), in support of HB468. I bring my experience managing electronics recycling contracts, including lithium-ion battery recycling, over the last 10 years at the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority. I am not speaking on behalf of the Authority.

Maryland Recycling Network members include municipal recycling managers, private sector and non-profit recyclers and individuals. We have direct experience operating recycling and composting programs at the private sector and municipal government level. We know the ins and outs of recycling in Maryland. Our experience informs our comments.

The Maryland Recycling Network promotes sustainable reduction, reuse and recycling (the 3 "R's"), to ensure that the use of virgin materials is minimized, materials otherwise destined for disposal are reused or recycled and strong demand exists for buying products made with recycled material content. We achieve these goals through education programs, advocacy activities to affect public policy, technical assistance efforts, and the development of markets to purchase recycled materials and manufacture products with recycled content.

We thank Delegates Love and Boyce for sponsoring this bill.

Lithium-ion batteries are found in a variety of electronic products including hearing aids, cell phones, e-bikes, scooters, laptops, tablets and vaping devices. When punctured, a chemical reaction can cause a fire or explosion. Chemical reactions during the fire make them burn longer and hotter and make them difficult and hazardous to extinguish.

Unfortunately, many people put these batteries in their recycling and trash bins. A recent National Solid Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) [report](#) estimates more than 5,000 fires a year at recycling and waste facilities and in collection trucks. While many recycling processing facility fires can be quickly contained, several facilities have been damaged so badly they had to be closed and rebuilt. The loss to the facility owner can be more than \$50 million dollars. In addition, local recycling programs relying on those facilities are forced to scramble to find new processing facilities for their recyclables. Insurance companies are also [backing away from insuring](#) these types of solid waste and recycling facilities due to fire concerns.

A survey of our members reported fires on tipping floors at recycling processing facilities, fires in trash collection trucks, fires at waste transfer stations and landfills, and even overnight fires in separately collected and stored electronics containment areas for electronics recycling contracts. Fortunately,

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none of these events caused serious damage. However, a [2022 fire](#) at a recycling processing facility in York, Pennsylvania, which is used by some Maryland communities, caused it to shut down.

This Task Force gives Maryland a chance to investigate the current issue statewide, recommend best practices for increased public education, comprehensive protocols with local fire departments, heat spot and fire detection and suppression equipment, as well as report on [emerging technologies and industries](#) transitioning away from liquid state to solid state electrolyte-based batteries, which are less susceptible to fires. These efforts will ensure that these batteries, so essential to so many products, can continue to be useful without causing fires and destabilizing our critical infrastructure.

The waste and recycling industry has released a [guide](#) to best management practices regarding lithium-ion batteries. But the best guide is keeping them out of the recycling stream and the trash. After all, the most effective education and enforcement efforts to improve our recycling programs come to naught if the collection truck or processing facility burns down.

The Maryland Recycling Network stands ready to serve as a sounding board and resource for legislators and others interested in pursuing our mission. Please do not hesitate to contact MRN via email phoustle@marylandrecyclingnetwork.org, phone 301-725-2508 or mail - MRN, PO Box 1640, Columbia MD 21044 if you have any questions or would like additional information regarding the above.

Sincerely,

Kitty McIlroy
President
Maryland Recycling Network