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From: Lynne Moulton <lynnemoulton@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 8, 2021 11:45 AM
To: House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Subject: In Support of 2021-H-5923

Dear Chairman Bennett and Committee Members,

I am a resident of East Greenwich and am writing in support of Bill 2021-H-5923. Below is my written testimony. Thank you for your attention.

Lynne Moulton

My testimony:

My family has owned a 40-acre farm in rural Maine for 4 generations. When I was a child, I remember roaming around the woodland part of the farm and encountering piles of metal objects: metal bed frames, metal canisters, old tools, wheel rims, etc. I asked my father why it was there, and he said, "well, before trash got picked up and put in landfills, people just piled it up away from their houses. And we burned what we could."

We deal with our trash in a variety of ways. We pile it, bury it, submerge it in waterways, and, yes, we burn it. All of these methods carry with them enormous environmental and health costs. Thankfully, since the 1970s we have tried to control and reduce the ill-effects of managing our waste. That is why I have the opportunity in 2021 to write to my state government House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources in support of Bill 2021-H-5923. I deeply appreciate this process and the opportunity to weigh in and ask the Committee to support this bill.

I use the term incineration throughout my remarks and I mean it to include all forms of this type of technology, including pyrolysis plants such as the one proposed now in West Warwick.

My arguments in support of this bill are twofold:

1. High-heat waste incineration and/or vaporization is not cheap, not safe, and not green.
2. The introduction of waste incineration into the state puts us on a path of waste management that relies on continued high volumes of waste and precludes the state from pursuing waste reduction goals.

Incineration technologies are often "sold" to communities as waste-to-energy solutions to two chronic problems: the need to deal with garbage and the need for electricity. The implication is that it is a highly efficient way to kill two birds with one stone. However, according to the United State Energy Information Administration, incineration is the most expensive type of energy production as compared to 11 other energy production methods, coming in at nearly \$12,000 per kW to operate and maintain. This fixed cost is more than double that of operating and maintaining nuclear energy production and 12 times as costly as the cost of producing energy from natural gas (2010. *US Energy Information Administration*. "Updated Capital Costs Estimates for Electricity Generation Plants".) Investment in literally any other type of energy production would be more cost effective in supplying our energy needs.

Incineration is also marketed as green because it is “renewable”, because the raw materials do not run out. In this sense, incineration relies on the continued supply of waste. Indeed, these facilities often contract with the communities where they are located for a specified volume of waste from the supplying area. The supply is “renewable” for sure, but it is not naturally replaceable like other renewable sources of energy, such as wind and solar. In this respect, incineration cannot truly be considered green since it is human production of waste that is required to continually “feed” the incinerators.

The effect of this scenario is to lock communities into a cycle of waste management that is contingent on producing waste. This path means that communities then have a built-in disincentive to work on a wide variety of other waste management strategies that are oriented toward the so-called 4 R’s of waste management: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Repurpose. Communities that are relying on the incinerator need to continue to feed incinerator plants are at the very least less likely to pursue these more environmentally responsible pathways of waste management. I want our state to be way more oriented toward waste reduction strategies rather than being tethered to strategies that literally require us to maintain status quo in terms of waste production. The passing of 2021-H-5923 is a huge step in the right direction.

Waste incineration plants operate in many countries around the world. However, member countries in the European Union are actively trying to disinvest in this technology because of the way they lock them into a waste production for energy cycle. Various countries are now scaling back or eliminating subsidies and increasing targeted taxes to make it harder to operate these facilities and to discourage new facilities from becoming established. I argue that Rhode Island should not begin investing in a waste management/energy producing strategy from which other countries are actively trying to back away.

I also enthusiastically support this bill because waste incineration has a long record of dangerous emissions into the air and water via the by-products of the process. These emissions are well documented by scientists working in both the public and private sectors. The National Research Council published a 335-page report on the deleterious effects of incineration on public health in 2000 (The National Academies Press), the Environmental Protection Agency has long tracked harmful emissions from waste incineration, and many local and national environmental groups conclude that the emission dampening technologies that incinerators are required to install and maintain do not and cannot eliminate the emission of the toxins named above.

I do not want to invite into our state technologies that have a long history of releasing acid gasses, dioxin, heavy metals, nitrogen oxide, and various particulates into the surrounding environment. The biggest source of these emissions is the incineration of materials from fossil fuel-based materials, particularly plastic and rubber. To put it in immediately consequential terms, these are materials that will be processed in the proposed Medrecycler pyrolysis plant in West Warwick if this bill does not pass and if Medrecycler’s application for operation is approved.

These toxic by-products of incineration have long-term negative health and environmental consequences for surrounding populations, often consequences that are experienced for multiple generations. Among the dangerous health hazards that can arise are cancer, birth defects, reproductive dysfunction, neurological problems and other adverse health effects that are known to occur at very low exposures to many of the metals and pollutants released by incineration facilities. Dirty industries that harm public health over time are often called “**grave diggers in disguise**”. They are businesses that court local leaders and community groups by promising jobs and economic development, but they bring more harm than good in terms of the health and well-being of the communities where they locate. This phrase seems appropriate in the context of this debate over whether or not to allow waste incineration technology to operate in Rhode Island. I support 2021-H-5923

because I do not want to invite into communities around our state incinerator businesses that will introduce long-term health hazards.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lynne Moulton
East Greenwich, RI