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MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER

## Incineration Moratorium and Phaseout

*Formal Title: An Act to Prohibit the Incineration of Solid Waste*

*Sponsors: Rep. Sean Garballey, Sen. Sal DiDomenico*

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*Based on previous filing H226/S346*

### Background

Like many states, Massachusetts has had a moratorium on increasing incineration capacity for over 20 years. The threat to public health posed by incinerators' emissions is indisputable. Incineration produces toxins such as dioxins, furans and other particulates; current technologies have made little progress in reducing the toxic threat that incineration poses to the state's residents. As a source of energy, burning trash is very inefficient, capturing only one fifth of the energy in garbage. In addition, it produces more global warming CO<sub>2</sub> per megawatt hour than natural gas, oil, or even coal.

Though waste generation is decreasing, pressure is being exerted by the waste industry to lift the ban. Industry pressure threatens to open the door for new facilities that would belch toxins, heavy metals, greenhouse gases, and ash or other by-products that will need to be landfilled. Equally important, incineration competes with recycling for paper, cardboard, plastic and other recyclables that could generate new businesses and jobs. The reasons for our 22-year-old moratorium are still valid today, and now additional concerns are making headlines: depletion of energy and material resources, and climate change.

### This bill would

- **Reaffirm the existing administrative moratorium**, maintaining existing capacity maximums and constructing no new high heat thermal processing plants.
- **Set a schedule to end the wasteful and dangerous process of incineration**, allowing adequate time for municipalities and companies to decrease the total waste that's generated, increase diversion of needed recyclables, and enforce existing waste bans of specific materials.

### Additional information:

- The EPA requires incinerators "to use the best control technologies," but emissions are self-reported and plants are not required to report emissions during start-up and shut-down periods or during malfunctions. When emissions exceed allowable limits the waste company is fined long-after the fact when the damage has been done. Also, ultra-fine particulates, most dangerous to health, are not limited or even measured.
- So-called "waste-to-energy" is the highest producer of CO<sub>2</sub> of all electrical generating processes, over 1800g of CO<sub>2</sub> per kWh This is quadruple the CO<sub>2</sub> output of natural gas, and only exacerbates that work that the state is doing to decrease our CO<sub>2</sub> output.
- Incineration destroys resources, competing with recycling for high BTU items such as paper, cardboard, and plastics. Massachusetts already burns 34% of our waste, destroying valuable resources for only a miniscule amount of energy, far less than could be saved by recycling.
- The health impacts of dioxin include cancer, IQ deficits, disrupted sexual development, birth defects, immune system damage, behavioral disorders, diabetes, and altered sex ratios. Studies show higher cancer rates and the presence of elevated levels of dioxin in the blood of people living near municipal solid waste incinerators.
- The newer high-heat conversion technologies, gasification, pyrolysis, and plasma arc, are classified by the EPA as what they are: incineration. But instead of burning garbage directly in a single chamber, they heat waste until it forms a gas that is then combusted as fuel. While incineration companies invest in greenwashing their processes, the differences among them are insignificant.

