

April 22, 2020

Mayor Young Called on to Defend Baltimore Clean Air Act for Earth Day

Baltimore, MD On the 50th anniversary of Earth Day residents and environmental advocates, with support from city council and mayoral candidates, are calling on Mayor Young to have the city appeal a lower court ruling that [struck down](#) the [Baltimore Clean Air Act](#) last month. Baltimore City's deadline to appeal is Monday, April 27th.

Passed unanimously by City Council in February 2019, the Baltimore Clean Air Act would have gone into effect this September, requiring the two large waste incinerators in the city [Wheelabrator Baltimore](#) and [Curtis Bay Energy](#) to meet modern emissions requirements or close down.

Wheelabrator Baltimore (a.k.a. "BRESKO") burns up to 2,250 tons of trash per day from the City, six Maryland Counties and seven other states. They are the city's largest industrial air polluter according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Curtis Bay Energy is the nation's largest medical waste incinerator and accepts medical waste from 20 states, DC, and Canada.

In a unanimous vote on April 6, Baltimore City Council adopted a [resolution](#) calling on the Baltimore City Law Department to appeal, but the city has yet to commit to defending its law. The council resolution cites state and federal laws that [clearly authorize](#) local governments to adopt clean air laws more protective than the state and federal minimums.

"In a time of crisis we need Mayor Young to step up and protect the environment and health of all Baltimore residents." said Rodette Jones, South Baltimore resident and community leader. "It's more crucial now than ever before to protect our fundamental right to breathe clean air and be accountable for people's lives."

Advocates will be holding a [virtual press conference](#) at 10am followed by a solemn "die in" in front of the BRESKO incinerator to recognize the lives lost to air pollution and the lives that will be put at risk if the Baltimore Clean Air Act is not defended.

"At stake here is the right of the city and all local governments in Maryland to protect their residents from air pollution," said Mike Ewall, attorney with Energy Justice Network, an environmental group that campaigned for the Clean Air Act. "The city has a strong legal case. With black residents [dying disproportionately](#) from COVID-19, and air pollution magnifying the situation, this is not a time to be giving up and protecting air polluters. We're seeing an especially deadly combination of the pandemic, ongoing incinerator air pollution, health disparities, and people losing their health insurance with increased unemployment."

"Small increases in air pollution called fine particulate matter (PM2.5) have been [shown](#) to have large impacts on COVID-19 deaths," said Gwen DuBois with Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility. "Even before the pandemic, Wheelabrator's PM2.5 pollution has been linked to respiratory and cardiac illness, like asthma attacks, heart attacks, hospitalizations and increased

mortality. Now a recent report from Harvard has found that a small increase in long-term PM2.5 pollution is associated with a large increase in death from COVID-19. Along with other causes of health disparities, COVID-19 pandemic reminds us how dangerous air pollution from Wheelabrator can be.”

“We have safer alternatives right here in the city that can handle our waste,” said Councilman Edward Reisinger (10th District) the lead sponsor of the resolution. “There is no need to burn trash or medical waste, especially if they refuse to meet modern emissions requirements,” he added.

“City council has backed the people’s call for both clean air and zero waste,” said Shashawnda Campbell of United Workers. “We don’t need BRESCO. We can have clean air, a healthier community, and more jobs doing the community-based solutions outlined in the [Fair Development Plan for Zero Waste](#).”

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PRESS CONFERENCE:

Apr 22, 2020 10 AM

<https://zoom.us/j/92972549223?pwd=S3UyL29wYld0RUxsaThMN3k1VmlFUT09>

Meeting ID: 929 7254 9223

Password: 981276

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