

# Economic and Health Benefits of Baltimore's Clean Air Act

- **Jobs:** Employment opportunities will be created to install air monitoring systems and pollution controls.
- **Circular Economy:** The Act, in combination with four related resolutions passed by the City Council, provides the impetus for Baltimore to transition to a zero-waste economy. Research shows recycling and composting can create at least 10 times more jobs than incineration and landfilling. Reuse and remanufacturing of these materials provides even more employment opportunities. Even just switching from incineration to using the city's public landfill creates 83% more jobs, and public sector ones.
- **Public Health:** Reducing incinerator pollution – either through compliance with the Act or if the incinerators choose to close – will improve public health and air quality.
  - *Nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>)* trigger asthma attacks, a leading cause of school absenteeism.
    - *Asthma-induced medical costs* and missed work and school contributes to **\$156 million in lost productivity** each year in Baltimore.<sup>1</sup>
  - *Lead pollution:* There is no safe level of lead exposure, especially for children under the age of 6. Lead poisoning is highly correlated with cognitive disabilities and behavioral issues – commonly noted by the *lead-crime hypothesis*.<sup>2</sup> Wheelabrator has released at least 10,000 pounds of lead into Baltimore's air over the life of their operation.
  - *Decreasing exposure to other toxic pollutants:* Hundreds of other dangerous chemicals are emitted from incinerators. Minimizing exposure to these toxins means less cancer, fewer birth defects, and many additional health benefits.
- **Economic Development:** Valuable waterfront land can be used for other purposes to benefit residents.
- **Transitioning to Zero-Waste:** Reducing, reusing, recycling and composting lead to:
  - The creation of 4,000 full-time-equivalent jobs if Baltimore reaches a 70% recycling rate.
  - Continuing to burn can cost the city up to \$10.5 million or more each year in tipping fees. The city could build a modern recycling sorting center for about \$35 million, with zero interest loans available, and could contract with other municipalities to take and sell their recyclables.

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## Fiscal Impact of Baltimore's Clean Air Act

- **Anticipated costs:** The Health Department will bear the costs of:
  - Certifying an Air Monitoring Contractor
  - Enforcement (levying fines based on violations found by the Air Monitoring Contractor)
- **Anticipated revenue:** Costs associated with the Act will likely be offset by fines that can be levied for violations. Fine money goes to the City.
- **Polluters pay:** Baltimore City will not have to pay for the cost of incinerators complying with the new air pollution standards. The costs of air pollution monitoring, disclosure, and more protective air pollution controls will be on the incinerators themselves.

\*\*\*NOTE: The City's contract with the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority (to burn waste at Wheelabrator through 12/31/2021) clearly states that the cost of compliance with any change in law cannot be passed on to the City without the City's written approval. The contract states: "*no Change in Law Adjustment shall be effective unless the City, in its sole discretion authorizes such Change in Law Adjustment in writing.... The City shall not be obligated to approve or accept any Change in Law Adjustment.*"

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<sup>1</sup> Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (2018), "*Asthma Challenges 2018: The most challenging places to live with asthma.*" Retrieved from: [www.aafa.org/media/AAFA-2018-Asthma-Capitals-Report.pdf](http://www.aafa.org/media/AAFA-2018-Asthma-Capitals-Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Boutwell, B. B. et al. (2018), "The intersection of aggregate-level lead exposure and crime," *Environmental Research*, 148; pp.79-85.