

**Energy Justice Network • 350 Philadelphia • Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments • Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education • Black and Brown Workers Cooperative • Campus Coalition Concerning Chester (C-4) • Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living • Clean Air Council • Clean Water Action • Conservation Voters of PA • Delaware Riverkeeper Network • Drexel Sierra Club • Earth - Bread + Brewery LLC • Exact Solar • Fluoride Free Philadelphia • Food & Water Watch • Fossil Free Drexel • Fossil Free Penn • HYPE Edison • Institute for Local Self-Reliance • Neighbors Against the Gas Plants • Northeast Philly for Peace and Justice • PennEnvironment • Pennsylvanians Organized to Witness, Empower and Rebuild (POWER) • Philadelphia Ethical Society • Philly E.D.G.E. • Philly Neighborhood Networks • Philly Power Research • Philly Thrive • PHS Tree Tenders • Physicians for Social Responsibility – Pennsylvania • Plymouth Incineration Community Information & Action • Post-Landfill Action Network • Protect Our Water & Air (POWA) • Sierra Club, Southeastern Pennsylvania Group • Sunrise Movement Pennsylvania • Sunrise Movement Swarthmore • US Youth Climate Strike • Zero Waste America • Zero Waste USA**

May 9, 2019

Re: Philadelphia Waste Contracts

Dear Mayor Kenney:

Your Streets Department is currently considering new contracts for where Philadelphia's trash will go for the next seven years.<sup>1</sup> We write to urge you to instruct your Streets Department NOT to award any contracts for burning our trash.

Trash incineration is the most expensive and polluting way to manage waste or to make energy.<sup>2</sup> It's dirtier than coal power plants and is more polluting than direct landfilling.<sup>3,4</sup> For every 100 tons burned, over 70 tons become air pollution, and the other nearly 30 tons end up as toxic ash that still is dumped in landfills, making landfills a more dangerous threat than they normally are.<sup>5</sup>

Since 2012, under our current contracts with Covanta and Waste Management, 45% of the city's trash has been sent to incinerators; the rest to landfills.<sup>6</sup> Three of these incinerators surround our city, and are three of the largest air polluters within the 5-county Philadelphia area.<sup>7</sup> We're also concerned that use of Waste Management's "SpecFuel" facility in Holmesburg is feeding our trash to be burned in the state's cement kilns, which are not even designed to be waste incinerators.

As the attached factsheet spells out, we're concerned about this incineration contract for several reasons:

Health: the three incinerators surrounding Philadelphia are among the region's 5 largest emitters of nitrogen oxide (NOx) pollution which causes asthma attacks.<sup>8</sup> Asthma is a leading cause of missed school

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<sup>1</sup> [www.phlcontracts.phila.gov/bs0/external/bidDetail.sdo?bidId=B1904538&parentUrl=activeBids](http://www.phlcontracts.phila.gov/bs0/external/bidDetail.sdo?bidId=B1904538&parentUrl=activeBids)

<sup>2</sup> [www.energyjustice.net/incineration](http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration)

<sup>3</sup> [www.energyjustice.net/incineration/worsethancoal](http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/worsethancoal)

<sup>4</sup> [www.energyjustice.net/files/incineration/incineration\\_vs\\_landfills.pdf](http://www.energyjustice.net/files/incineration/incineration_vs_landfills.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Division of Reporting and Fees data.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> National Emissions Inventory, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. [www.epa.gov/air-emissions-inventories/2014-national-emissions-inventory-nei-data](http://www.epa.gov/air-emissions-inventories/2014-national-emissions-inventory-nei-data)

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

and work days, and is a serious problem for our city. Philadelphia is the 4th worst place in the nation for asthma sufferers, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.<sup>9</sup>

Pollution: the incinerators are leading sources of toxic mercury pollution, hydrochloric acid, emissions and many other toxic pollutants that contribute to cancers, birth defects, immune system problems, and much more.<sup>10</sup> Incinerators in southeast and southcentral Pennsylvania are 60% more air polluting than landfills, according to the latest PA DEP data, and affect a much larger population.<sup>11</sup>

Civil Rights: the largest recipient of our trash has been the incinerator in the City of Chester in Delaware County.<sup>12</sup> It's the nation's largest trash incinerator,<sup>13</sup> in a city known as one of the nation's worst cases of environmental racism.<sup>14</sup> It's a violation of the Civil Rights Act for the city, as a recipient of federal funds, to take actions that have a discriminatory effect on protected classes.

Chester's situation is particularly dire, as we're feeding trash to the nation's largest incinerator, which is the #1 air polluter in Chester, and 3rd in the 5-county region.<sup>15</sup> Chester has a childhood asthma hospitalization rate three times the state average.<sup>16</sup> In Philadelphia, we're downwind, and this pollution affects our children as well.

As the mayor who proclaimed October 11, 2018 as Children's Environmental Health Day, we urge you to instruct your Streets Department to reject signing contracts that allow any of our waste to be burned anywhere, in incinerators, cement kilns, or otherwise.

It's important to recognize, as the city strives for Zero Waste, that Zero Waste is defined internationally to mean zero incineration, and to strive for at least a 90% reduction of waste going to landfills.<sup>17</sup> As other cities like Baltimore and Detroit have started to move away from incineration, we hope you'll guide Philadelphia in the same direction, for the health and benefit of us all.

Sincerely,



[For Mike Ewall and the 40 undersigned organizations]

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<sup>9</sup> Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, *Asthma Capitals 2018*. [www.aafa.org/media/2119/aafa-2018-asthma-capitals-report.pdf](http://www.aafa.org/media/2119/aafa-2018-asthma-capitals-report.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Note 7 *supra*.

<sup>11</sup> 2017 PA Department of Environmental Protection Air Emissions Report. [www.depgreenport.state.pa.us/powerbiproxy/powerbi/Public/DEP/AQ/PBI/Air\\_Emissions\\_Report](http://www.depgreenport.state.pa.us/powerbiproxy/powerbi/Public/DEP/AQ/PBI/Air_Emissions_Report). Data summarized in: [www.energyjustice.net/files/incineration/incineration\\_vs\\_landfills.pdf](http://www.energyjustice.net/files/incineration/incineration_vs_landfills.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Note 11 *supra*.

<sup>13</sup> Energy Recovery Council 2018 Industry Directory. [www.energyrecoverycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ERC-2018-directory.pdf](http://www.energyrecoverycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ERC-2018-directory.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Testimony before Philadelphia City Council Hearing on Environmental Health, December 12, 2018. [www.ejnet.org/chester/2018-12-12testimony.pdf](http://www.ejnet.org/chester/2018-12-12testimony.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Note 7 *supra*.

<sup>16</sup> PA Department of Health asthma data, summarized in chart at [www.ejnet.org/chester/asthma.html](http://www.ejnet.org/chester/asthma.html)

<sup>17</sup> Zero Waste International Alliance sets the standards for what Zero Waste means globally. See: [www.zwia.org/policies](http://www.zwia.org/policies), specifically [www.zwia.org/zero-waste-definition/](http://www.zwia.org/zero-waste-definition/) and [www.zwia.org/zero-waste-business-principles/](http://www.zwia.org/zero-waste-business-principles/). Their definitions are used internationally for green business certification by the Green Business Certification, Inc. at [true.gbci.org](http://true.gbci.org)

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