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3 Title: Waste Incinerator Ban
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5 Introduced by: Shannon Paquette for the Medical Student Section
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9 Referred to: Reference Committee B
10
11 House Action: **APPROVED AS AMENDED**
12

13
14 Whereas, the idea to increase the use of trash incinerators to produce heat/steam to generate
15 electricity originated during an energy crisis during the Nixon administration¹, and
16

17 Whereas, as part of a financial decision in the 1970s, the city of Detroit decided to create the largest
18 municipal solid waste incinerator in the nation, but this was not without controversy and opposition¹, and
19

20 Whereas, it required about \$440 million in bond sales to create the Detroit incinerator and it was
21 hypothesized that the cost of waste collection services would be offset by revenue generated from the sale
22 of steam and electricity¹, and
23

24 Whereas, health experts and environmentalists in southeast Michigan and southwestern Ontario
25 even at the time opposed constructing this facility since it would put millions of tons of pollutants into the
26 air that would increase morbidity rates¹, and
27

28 Whereas, the incinerator became operational in 1986, and due to the increase in pollution, the
29 State of Michigan's Department of Environment Quality required expensive new pollution control when
30 the facility applied for permit renewals in 1991^{1,4}, and
31

32 Whereas, due to a lack of funds to install this equipment, the City of Detroit sold the facility to
33 financial holding companies for \$54 million and the company issued bonds for \$157 million to finance the
34 new equipment^{1,2} and
35

36 Whereas, these bonds were still being paid by the city until 2009^{1,2}, and
37

38 Whereas, the firms also received pollution tax credits worth about \$200 million for the upgrade²,
39 and
40

41 Whereas, \$4.1 million dollars in Brownfield tax credits are given to the incinerator's board of
42 directors for operation², and
43

44 Whereas, the trash base for the city of Detroit has dwindled as the population of Detroit has
45 dwindled and the facility began importing trash from neighboring areas to stay operational³, and
46

47 Whereas, Oakland County was responsible for 66 percent of the waste, while Wayne County
48 produced 19 percent, leading to injustice as individuals in Detroit bear the health effects of neighboring
49 areas' trash⁷; and
50

51 Whereas, in 2007-2008, City of Detroit residents were being charged about \$172 per ton of trash,
52 which is five to seven times the cost per ton offered to neighboring areas and 14 times the cost per ton
53 offered to private haulers², and
54

55 Whereas, the incinerator is currently operated by the Michigan Waste Energy firm, a subsidiary of
Covanta Energy, and due to environmental regulations, they are restricted to burning two of the three

56 furnaces at one time amounting to approximately 2,800 tons of trash daily or 800,000 tons of trash yearly^{1,2},
57 and

58
59 Whereas, it is not financially beneficial to run the facility because the city of Detroit pays more per
60 ton to dispose of solid waste in this manner than our surrounding communities or other large cities spend
61 in disposing of their solid waste using other methods¹⁴; and

62
63 Whereas, Detroit pays \$125 per ton to get rid of municipal solid waste via the incinerator as
64 compared to \$25 per ton to dispose in local landfills¹, and

65
66 Whereas, generated steam and electricity are sold to Michigan Consolidated Gas/Detroit Edison for
67 \$40 million annually¹, and

68
69 Whereas, the facility is one of the state's leading producers of pollution producing 25 tons of
70 hazardous air pollutants annually as well as 1800 tons of sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide, mercury and lead²,
71 and

72
73 Whereas: the incinerator creates around 25 tons of hazardous wastes every year and over 1800
74 tons of pollutants², and

75
76 Whereas, the ash of slag byproducts of the incinerator are toxic and disposed into landfills^{2,16}, and

77
78 Whereas, Michigan landfills abide by both federal and stringent state regulations regarding liners
79 and general standards to prevent environmental contamination¹⁹, and

80
81 Whereas, an inconsistency exists where individuals in the State of Michigan are banned from
82 burning trash under the Public Act 102 of 2012 and open burning is regulated under the Natural Resources
83 and Environmental Protection Act (Act 451 of 1994), yet facilities such as the incinerator are exempt from
84 such acts⁸, and

85
86 Whereas, there is concern for those employed by the facility, but recycling and composting create
87 four to ten times more jobs than landfills or incinerators², and

88
89 Whereas, recycling and composting could be made widespread, the presence of the incinerator
90 and those that are financially invested and profit from the facility continue to prevent taking steps away
91 from depending on this facility^{2,14}, and

92
93 Whereas, currently only 11 percent of the city of Detroit residents participate in recycling¹¹, and

94
95 Whereas, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), burning municipal solid waste
96 creates nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxides, mercury and dioxins along with the primary greenhouse gas,
97 carbon dioxide even after using modern scrubbing equipment^{1,2}, and

98
99 Whereas, it is well known that asthma rates are higher in Detroit as compared to the average rate
100 in the rest of the state, it is important to note that asthma hospitalization rates are approximately three
101 times that of the Michigan average for children living around the incinerator^{2,12,13,18}, and

102
103 Whereas, data from the EPA in 2009 cited that from 1990 to 2003 asthma hospitalization rates were
104 75 percent higher in Wayne County than in the rest of the State of Michigan^{13,17}, and

105
106 Whereas, hospital and health care costs of individuals affected by the pollution from the facility
107 add to the cost burden of the facility¹⁷, and

108
109 Whereas, the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center obtained information using the Freedom of
110 Information Act, citing the facility for violating the clean air act (21 violations since 2015 for strong odors
111 and 19 violations for carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter emissions above allowable
112 limits)^{5,7}, and

113 Whereas, pollutants from the facility are known to cause cardiac disease, premature death, and
114 premature birth all of which are higher in Detroit along with causing irritation to mucous membranes
115 including the eyes, ear, nose, and throat⁶, and

116
117 Whereas, according to EPA statistics 7,280 residents live within one mile of the facility and these
118 residents suffer from respiratory related health issues⁶, and

119
120 Whereas, in 2007 approximately 14 percent of the nation's solid waste was burned in 89
121 incinerators around the country they only produced 3/1000 of the nation's electricity and currently there
122 are between 80 to 90 facilities in the U.S. that are still operational^{1,6,15}, and

123
124 Whereas, in the State of Michigan there are two trash burning facilities, one in Detroit and the
125 other in Kent county¹⁰, and

126
127 Whereas, at the current rate of deposition, Michigan has an estimated 27 years of landfill space
128 available, our state currently imports 22.7 percent of yearly waste deposition from other states and
129 countries⁹, and

130
131 Whereas, current yearly estimates of 0.16 percent of landfill waste originate from incinerator by-
132 products, if all the incinerator waste was directed away from the incinerators and instead toward landfills
133 without recycling or composting, it would only amount to 1.8 percent of yearly landfill waste⁹, and

134
135 Whereas, the approach to dealing with waste currently directed toward incinerators could include
136 a combination of reducing waste production, recycling, composting, and landfill usage as well as stopping
137 the practice of importing trash from other states and nations, and

138
139 Whereas, when examining the Detroit incinerator further, net energy is lost by the process when
140 accounting for fuel that is burned by trucks collecting and transporting waste to the plant, and the demand
141 it creates for the constant production of goods and materials²; therefore be it

142
143 RESOLVED: That MSMS request and actively advocate for state legislation that bans waste
144 incinerators in the state of Michigan due to their adverse health effects and the environmental impact in
145 addition to the lack of cost effectiveness and instead support and prioritize alternative forms of waste
146 management and clean energy production that do not pose health risks; and be it further

147
148 RESOLVED: That Michigan Delegation to the American Medical Association (AMA) ask our AMA to
149 request and actively advocate for national legislation that bans waste incinerators in our nation due to their
150 adverse health effects and the environmental impact in addition to the lack of cost effectiveness and
151 instead support and prioritize alternative forms of waste management and clean energy production that
152 do not pose health risks.

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154
155 WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE: NONE

Relevant MSMS Policy:

Policy Statement of Environmental Pollution

MSMS supports efforts to improve environmental health. MSMS supports all agencies charged with the control of environmental pollution. (Prior to 1990)

- Edited 1998
- Reaffirmed (Res35-05A)
- Reaffirmed (Res02-16)

Relevant AMA Policy:

Pollution Control and Environmental Health H-135.996

Our AMA supports (1) efforts to alert the American people to health hazards of environmental pollution and the need for research and control measures in this area; and (2) its present activities in pollution control and improvement of environmental health.

Green Initiatives and the Health Care Community H-135.939

Our AMA supports: (1) responsible waste management policies, including the promotion of appropriate recycling and waste reduction; (2) the use of ecologically sustainable products, foods, and materials when possible; (3) the development of products that are non-toxic, sustainable, and ecologically sound; (4) building practices that help reduce resource utilization and contribute to a healthy environment; and (5) community-wide adoption of 'green' initiatives and activities by organizations, businesses, homes, schools, and government and health care entities.

Conservation, Recycling and Other "Green" Initiatives G-630.100

AMA policy on conservation and recycling include the following: (1) Our AMA directs its offices to implement conservation-minded practices whenever feasible and to continue to participate in "green" initiatives. (2) It is the policy of our AMA to use recycled paper whenever reasonable for its in-house printed matter and publications, including JAMA, and materials used by the House of Delegates, and that AMA printed material using recycled paper should be labeled as such. (3) During meetings of the American Medical Association House of Delegates, our AMA Sections, and all other AMA meetings, recycling bins, where and when feasible, for white (and where possible colored) paper will be made prominently available to participants.

Stewardship of the Environment H-135.973

The AMA: (1) encourages physicians to be spokespersons for environmental stewardship, including the discussion of these issues when appropriate with patients; (2) encourages the medical community to cooperate in reducing or recycling waste; (3) encourages physicians and the rest of the medical community to dispose of its medical waste in a safe and properly prescribed manner; (4) supports enhancing the role of physicians and other scientists in environmental education; (5) endorses legislation such as the National Environmental Education Act to increase public understanding of environmental degradation and its prevention; (6) encourages research efforts at ascertaining the physiological and psychological effects of abrupt as well as chronic environmental changes; (7) encourages international exchange of information relating to environmental degradation and the adverse human health effects resulting from environmental degradation; (8) encourages and helps support physicians who participate actively in international planning and development conventions associated with improving the environment; (9) encourages educational programs for worldwide family planning and control of population growth; (10) encourages research and development programs for safer, more effective, and less expensive means of preventing unwanted pregnancy; (11) encourages programs to prevent or reduce the human and environmental health impact from global climate change and environmental degradation. (12) encourages economic development programs for all nations that will be sustainable and yet nondestructive to the environment; (13) encourages physicians and environmental scientists in the United States to continue to incorporate concerns for human health into current environmental research and public policy initiatives; (14) encourages physician educators in medical schools, residency programs, and continuing medical education sessions to devote more attention to environmental health issues; (15) will strengthen its liaison with appropriate environmental health agencies, including the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS); (16) encourages expanded funding for environmental research by the federal government; and (17) encourages family planning through national and international support.

¹ Greater Detroit Resource Recovery Facility/Detroit Incinerator. Detroit: The History and Future of the Motor City. <http://detroit1701.org/Detroit%20Incinerator.html>. Accessed February 3, 2017.

² Hussain S. Overpaying for Detroit's Big Mistake. The Detroit Incinerator. <https://sites.google.com/a/cornell.edu/the-detroit-incinerator/to-dos>. Accessed February 3, 2017.

³ Executive Summary. The Detroit Incinerator. <https://sites.google.com/a/cornell.edu/the-detroit-incinerator/>. Accessed February 3, 2017.

⁴ Detroit Incinerator. Zero Waste Detroit. <http://zerowastedetroit.org/our-work/detroit-incinerator>. Accessed February 6, 2017.

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- ⁵ Lynch J. Detroit incinerator faces lawsuit over emissions. The Detroit News. <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2016/10/18/detroit-incinerator-faces-suit-safety-violations/92351000/>. October 18, 2016. Accessed February 6, 2017.
- ⁶ Felton R. Detroit incinerator is hotspot for health problems, environmentalists claim. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/oct/23/detroit-garbage-incinerator-pollution-health-problems-environmentalists>. October 23, 2016. Accessed February 5, 2017.
- ⁷ Blitchok D. Attorney: Detroit incinerator is violating the Clean Air Act. Detroit Metro Times. <http://www.metrotimes.com/news-hits/archives/2016/10/20/attorney-detroit-incinerator-is-violating-the-clean-air-act>. October 20, 2016. Accessed February 6, 2017.
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- ¹⁰ West Michigan Environmental Action Council. The Kent County Waste-to-Energy Facility. <https://wmeac.org/the-kent-county-waste-to-energy-facility/>. March 5, 2015. Accessed February 6, 2017.
- ¹¹ Ferretti C. Detroit plans outreach to boost recycling participation. The Detroit News. <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2016/02/11/detroit-recycling-outreach-campaign/80254664/>. February 11, 2016. Accessed February 6, 2017.
- ¹² American Lung Association. Michigan: Wayne. <http://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/healthy-air/sota/city-rankings/states/michigan/wayne.html>. 2017. Accessed February 6, 2017.
- ¹³ AirNow. Air Quality Maps-Archive-Monthly Overview. <https://airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=airnow.mapsarchivecalendar>. Accessed February 6, 2017.
- ¹⁴ Porter, C. Incineration: A recycling killer?. Toronto Star. https://www.thestar.com/yourtoronto/yourcitymycity/2010/04/03/incineration_a_recycling_killer.html. April 3, 2010. Accessed February 6, 2017.
- Energy Justice Network. Commercial Trash Incinerators in the U.S. <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/usplants>. Accessed February 6, 2017.
- ¹⁶ Zero Waste America. <http://www.zerowasteamerica.org/incinerators.htm>. Accessed February 6, 2017.
- ¹⁷ DeGuire P et al. Detroit: The Current Status of the Asthma Burden. Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/Detroit-AsthmaBurden_516668_7.pdf. March, 2016. Accessed February 6, 2017.
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- ¹⁹ Business and Legal Resources. Michigan Landfills: What you need to know. BLR. <http://www.blr.com/Environmental/Waste/Landfills-in-Michigan>. 2017. Accessed February 4, 2017.