



GHIAA

Greater Hartford
— Interfaith —
Action Alliance

ADVOCACY GUIDE: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

HB 6664: An Act Concerning Managing Waste and Creating a Waste Authority

ISSUE SUMMARY

In July 2022, the MIRA trash-to-energy plant in the South End of Hartford ceased operation. Since then, the state has trucked nearly all its trash out of state to Ohio, Pennsylvania, or Virginia. To respond to this ongoing problem, HB 6664 tackles many aspects of municipal waste, from packaging requirements to composting, but for the purpose of GHIAA's environmental justice issue, this guide will focus on the aspects of this bill related to the oversight and remediation of the South End incinerator site.

HB 6664 calls for the dissolution of MIRA, the Materials Innovation Recycling Authority, a quasi-public entity that has overseen the trash-to-energy plant since 2014. If passed, this bill would create the Connecticut Waste Authority and task it with identifying the needs for redeveloping the MIRA properties, temporarily operating MIRA's two operational transfer stations in Essex and Torrington; and winding down MIRA operations by June 2025.

GHIAA is supportive of these efforts. Part of the reason why the trash-to-energy plant is now shuttered is that suburban towns refused to pay for the ongoing maintenance fees for the property. Even now that operations have ceased, the current MIRA board continues to offer these same towns subsidies for trash removal, squandering the MIRA reserves that are needed for remediation of the Hartford site.

We are, however, strongly advocating the following amendments to the proposed bill:

- Hartford residents should occupy at least 50% of the seats on the newly formed board;
- The State of Connecticut must make a long-term commitment to engage Hartford residents in determining the future use of the incinerator site, and to remediate and restore the site for its future use, even if the cost exceeds current MIRA reserves.

As a justice organization committed to centering the voices of those most impacted by the problem, we recognize that Hartford has borne the brunt of this regional service. As such, South End residents should be the leaders in reimagining what the waterfront property could be.

GHIAA calls on our legislators to amend and pass HB 6664 so that we can responsibly and equitably remediate the incinerator site and rectify decades of environmental injustice.

TALKING POINTS TO USE WITH LEGISLATORS

- **Responsibility to the Earth.**
 - In a state as wealthy as Connecticut, it is shameful that we truck our trash to poor, out-of-state communities. Not only are we burdening these towns with our waste, we are also emitting thousands of tons of carbon dioxide to do so through trucking.
- **Responsibility to Hartford.**
 - Hartford has hosted the largest trash processing plant in the state since 1987. It has served 70 towns in Connecticut, but Hartford residents have shouldered the burden of ash polluting the air, putrid smells, and toxins leaching into nearby ground and water sources.
 - In 2018-2019, mountains of trash piled up in Hartford due to an equipment failure. The MIRA plant was out of commission for nearly two months, but other towns continued to make trash Hartford's problem, despite refusing to pay for the necessary repair.
 - Hartford receives no tax money for this valuable land. The city receives a small Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), but nowhere near the amount it would see as a taxable piece of land.
 - Governor Lamont has stated that the former trash-to-energy plant won't be redeveloped into another processing plant. Hartford residents should have a say in what it does become.
- **Remediation.**
 - As of February 2023, MIRA has \$55 million in its reserves. At its February meeting, the MIRA Board of Directors voted to subsidize the current tipping fees for towns continuing to use MIRA, costing \$12 million. The current board is comprised primarily of leaders from suburban towns, with just two representatives from Hartford, Mayor Luke Bronin and his Chief of Staff, Dave Steuber. Both Bronin and Steuber objected to these subsidies.
 - A 2013 decommissioning report estimated the costs for closing the trash-to-energy plant would be \$19 million. That is now estimated to be \$70 million.
 - Hartford should have representation to decide what becomes of the property, and the remediation needed should be based on the vision of the impacted community, not on the limits of the current MIRA reserves.