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House Environment and Transportation Committee

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Senate Bill 253 – *Controlled Hazardous Substance Facility Permit – Research Facilities –
Chemical Warfare Material Requirements*

POSITION: OPPOSE – LETTER OF CONCERN

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, opposes Senate Bill 253, legislation which exempts the incineration of chemical warfare materials from the requirements under a controlled hazardous substance facility permit if the incineration is done for research, development, or demonstration purposes. We understand that this bill is intended to facilitate research and development activities and the resulting incineration of chemical warfare materials at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG).

MedChi, of course, supports the elimination of chemical weaponry and the need for our military to conduct research that is important to national security. The bill as amended adds restrictions and accountability that are helpful, however MedChi does have remaining concerns about the bill. The incineration of chemical warfare materials can potentially release harmful toxins into the surrounding air of a densely populated area. There is a documented history of Maryland residents opposing plans to incinerate chemical warfare materials at APG dating back to the 1990s at the time when the U.S. Military sought its chemical weapon stockpile. The community's concerns about the public health and environmental impacts of incineration at APG resulted in the Army using neutralization rather than incineration to eliminate chemical weapons.

In our initial testimony on this bill, MedChi submitted the following questions for consideration:

- What are plans to protect people in the most significant areas at risk from a release of a worst-case scenario?
- Will such plans be presented publicly to residents and local and State governments?
- Will the public and/or appropriate government agencies be informed about the type and quantity of materials to be incinerated?
- Have safer alternatives to incineration been considered? Have less densely populated areas been considered for these activities?

The amendments establish a permitting process for the incineration of chemical warfare materials at research facilities, with requirements for monitoring, reporting, and oversight. They include provisions for time-limited permits, continuous air emissions monitoring with a 10-minute

reporting lag, and consideration of soil and water pollution. Research facilities must submit annual reports on incineration activities and biennial impact assessments on public health and the environment. The Department has the authority to terminate operations if necessary and can modify or revoke permits based on findings. While these amendments introduce some safeguards, they do not fully address concerns regarding public safety, transparency, or the potential risks of incineration in a populated area.

We appreciate that the amendments introduce additional safeguards into the bill, but we believe that they do not fully address all of the questions raised. We continue to have concerns about this activity occurring in a densely-populated area of the State. Minimally, we would request that the committee consider an additional amendment on requiring an emergency preparedness plan in the event that something goes wrong in connection with this activity. Thank you for the consideration.

For more information call:

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