

# Clean air is a Human Right

## Stop the Incinerator!



# **We believe we can achieve meaningful structural change - that is why we are here!**

## **Goals for today:**

- 1. SHARE: To share the story of how student leaders developed a strategy to stop a major environmental injustice**
- 2. CONNECT: To have a good discussion about the issue, listen to your thoughts and answer questions.**
- 3. APPLY: To spark ideas about how to build on and apply lessons from our story**

## **Main beliefs:**

- 1. We are in a power struggle to transform existing structures to be more just and sustainable**
- 2. We have the ability to transform structures but we cannot do it alone**
- 3. We all have a role to play in making this happen**

## **Free Your Voice:**

**We are a group of students joining together with parents, teachers and community members to fight for our human rights.**



**We meet every week to study, reflect and act together.**



**We started paying closer attention to issues in our community and in 2012 we learned about something that really caught our eye...**



**Since 2009 there was a plan to build the nation's largest trash-burning incinerator less than a mile from schools here in Baltimore.**



**We found out years after political, legal and economic choices were already made.**

**We wanted to learn more and asked a lot of questions:**

- **One question that kept going through our minds was about equity: Why build such a massive incinerator so close to our schools in an over polluted community?**
- **After we spent a year researching the incinerator and concluding that we opposed it - we asked: What could we do?**

# How would the incinerator impact us?

- The incinerator would need to burn 4,000 tons of trash per day to stay in operation.
- We are talking about tires, metals and plastics along with household garbage.
- What's more: 100% of the garbage would need to be imported from outside Baltimore just to keep the incinerator burning - none would come from the city

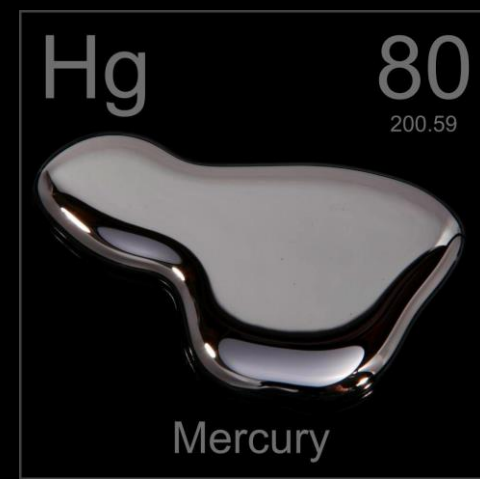
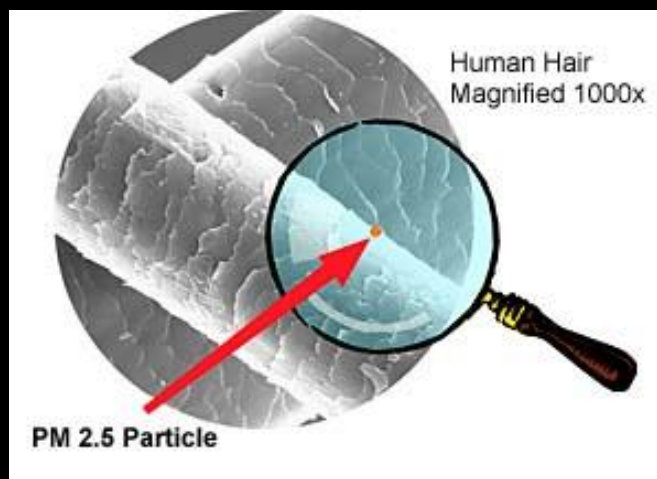


# What happens when you burn 4,000 tons of trash every day?

Trash incinerators pump out more pollution and produce more greenhouse gases per hour of energy than Maryland's largest coal-fired plants. (Environmental Integrity Project Report).

This incinerator would release 240 lbs of brain-damaging mercury into the air every year. It would also release 1,000 lbs of harmful lead per year into the air we breathe, along with dioxins and ultra fine particulates.

These particles can be lethal, causing cancer, heart attacks, strokes, asthma, and pulmonary disease. It is estimated that airborne particulates cause the deaths of more than 2 million people worldwide each year.



# And we are still left with a lot of toxic ash

**Between 15 and 25 percent of the incinerated trash ends up as ash that then has to be dealt with (landfilling is one way to dispose of ash).**

**Curtis Bay is also very close to the site of a large landfill. As you will see during this presentation, Curtis Bay, Brooklyn, Fairfield and Wagners Point have a long history of living next to polluting developments.**



# Where would the incinerator be built?

**The incinerator would be built in Fairfield at the site of a former pesticide manufacturing company called FMC.**

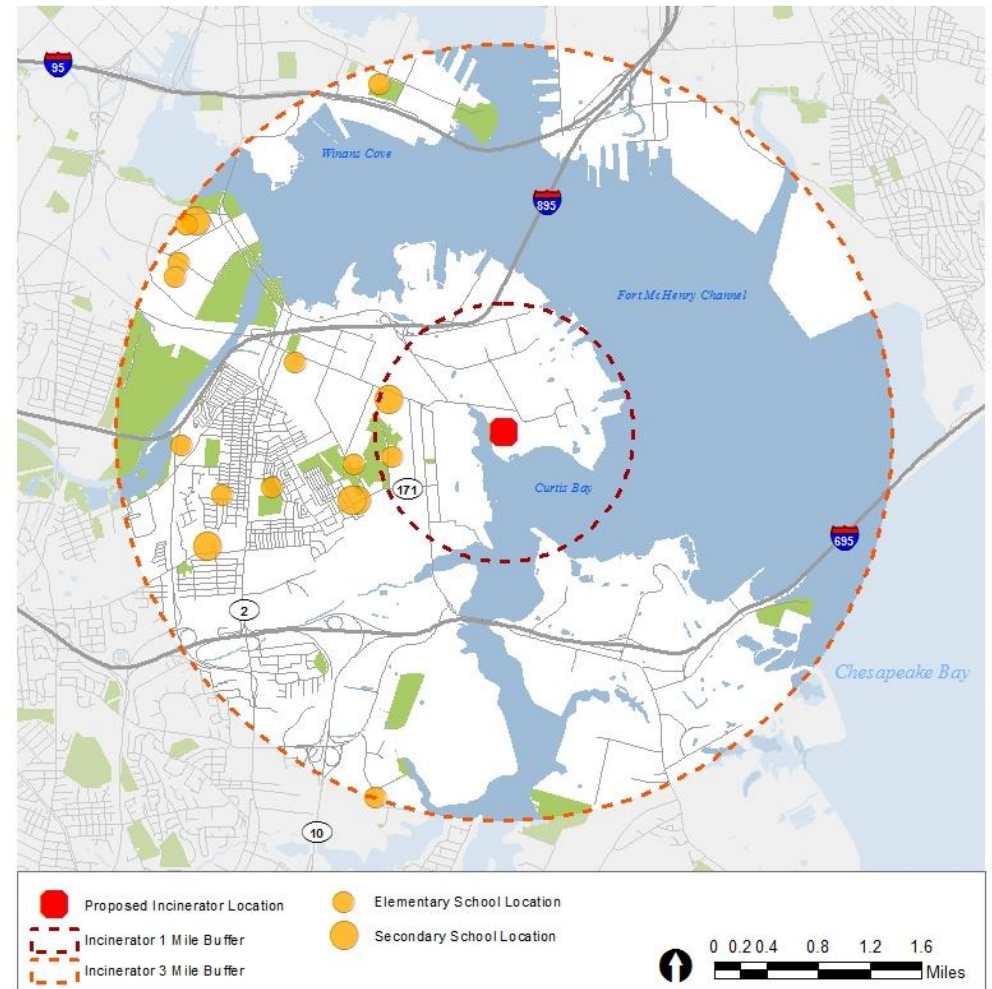
**People used to live in Fairfield, but in the late 1990s the entire community, along with nearby Wagners Point, had to leave because of the high levels of toxic pollution.**



# The largest trash-burning incinerator in the nation would be less than a mile away from schools in Curtis Bay

The incinerator would be less than a mile from schools, playgrounds and homes in Curtis Bay.

Benjamin Franklin HS and Curtis Bay Elementary are less than a mile away, and 18 other schools are within 3 miles of the proposed incinerator.



Curtis Bay Elementary/Middle School and Benjamin Franklin High School fall within the one mile buffer.

**We wanted to find out what our neighbors thought about the project.  
Of the hundreds we spoke with, only a handful knew it existed.  
Almost everyone had serious questions and concerns.**



## TAKING ACTION 2013

We organized a big march from Benjamin Franklin less than a mile to the site of the incinerator.



# Stop the Incinerator!



**We received a lot of support and media coverage for our campaign to Stop the Incinerator...but...**

## **BALTIMORE BREW**

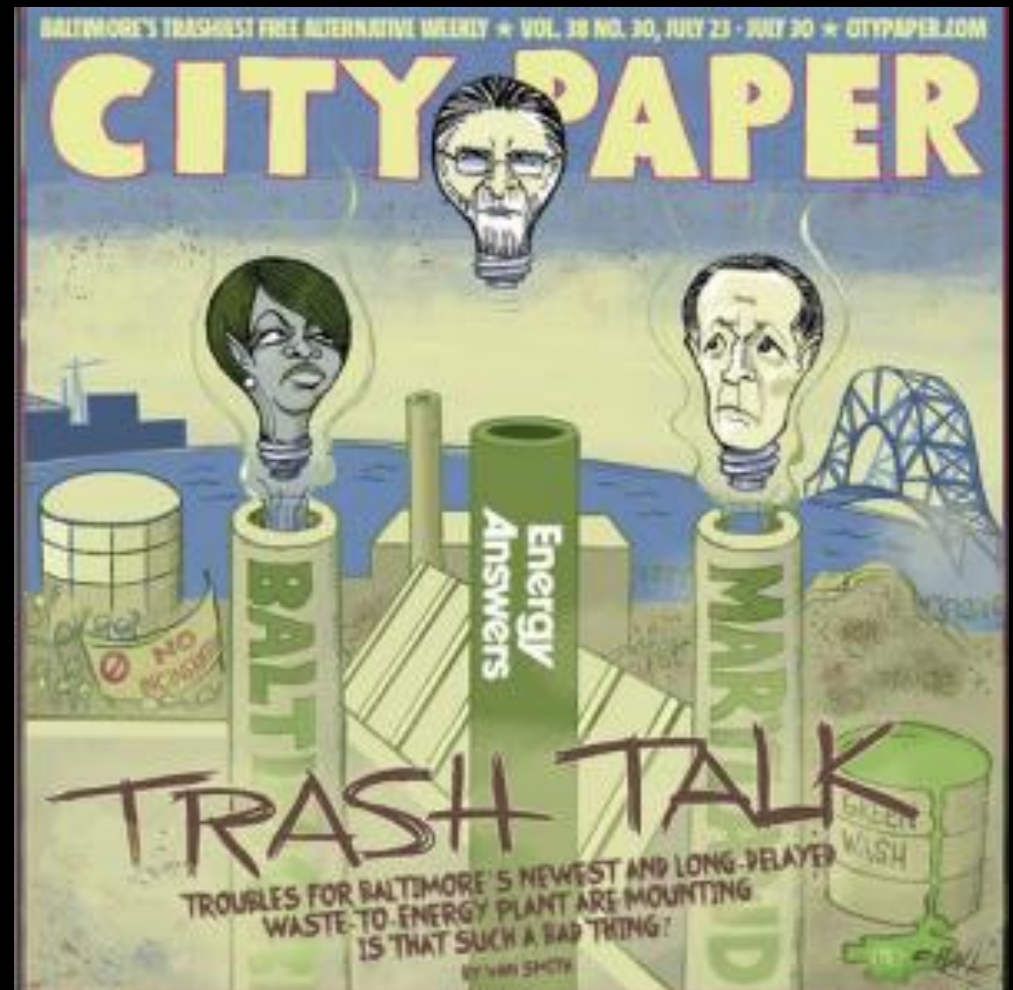
### **Pollution-weary students stage a march to protest incinerator**

Already breathing the dirtiest air in the city, south Baltimore students say Albany company's trash-to-energy plant will worsen it

## **GRIST.ORG**

**Smokestack city: An industrial neighborhood decides it has had enough**

By [Brentin Mock](#)



**we realized we didn't have leverage and that the project was set to continue**

**“The key to this is going to be the energy sales,” Kurt Krammer, project manager for Energy Answers. (Daily Record, 2011)**

# **This brought us back to the question: Who will be buying energy from the incinerator?**

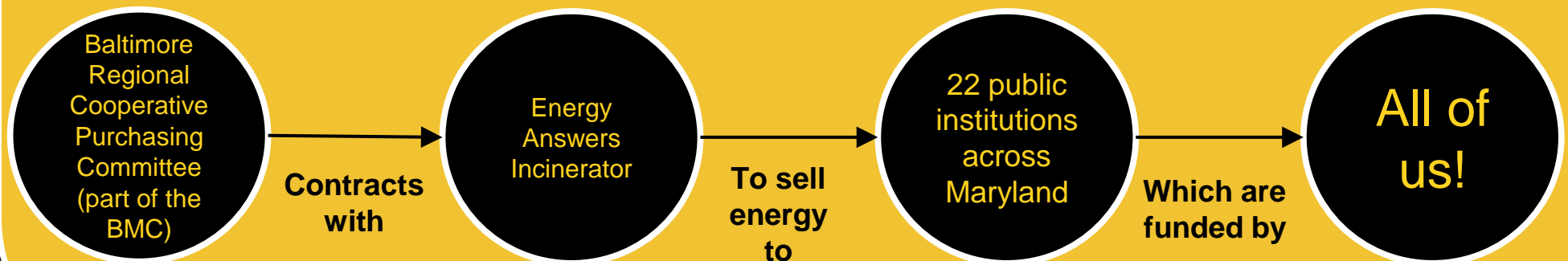


**In August 2011, the Baltimore Regional Cooperative Purchasing Committee contracted with Energy Answers to buy 25 megawatts of Tier 1 renewable energy.**

**This means that 22 public entities across the state, including Baltimore City Public Schools, would be buying 20% of the electricity produced by the incinerator.**

# A direct connection between residents across the region and the incinerator

"The Fairfield Renewable Energy Project is an exciting addition to the entire region," said Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Chair of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC). "The contract to purchase energy from the new plant will help Energy Answers obtain financing, and will also help protect local governments from fluctuations in the energy market."



**We don't like this picture! Our public institutions should not be supporting the incinerator.**



**We contacted Baltimore City Schools to learn more**

**BALTIMORE CITY**  
**PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**We obtained the contract between the City Schools and the incinerator. We learned that Energy Answers has until spring of 2015 to start producing power. At that point, the schools and the other entities can leave the contract without penalty.**

**This is what the incinerator looked like  
in early 2014...so it seemed unlikely that they would  
meet their deadline.**



**We found our leverage! Not only were we part of an institution that was invested in the incinerator - but we had a clear way for our institution to divest!**



**We shared this information with students, parents and teachers across the city - people were shocked and moved to get involved**

# **In May 2014**

## **Students, parents and teachers came unified to present to the School Board**

**We informed the Board about the issue, presented the facts, and defined a clear choice: for them to pledge to leave their contract with the incinerator in spring 2015.**



## **We led the School Board on a tour of our community school board begins to speak publicly about the incinerator**

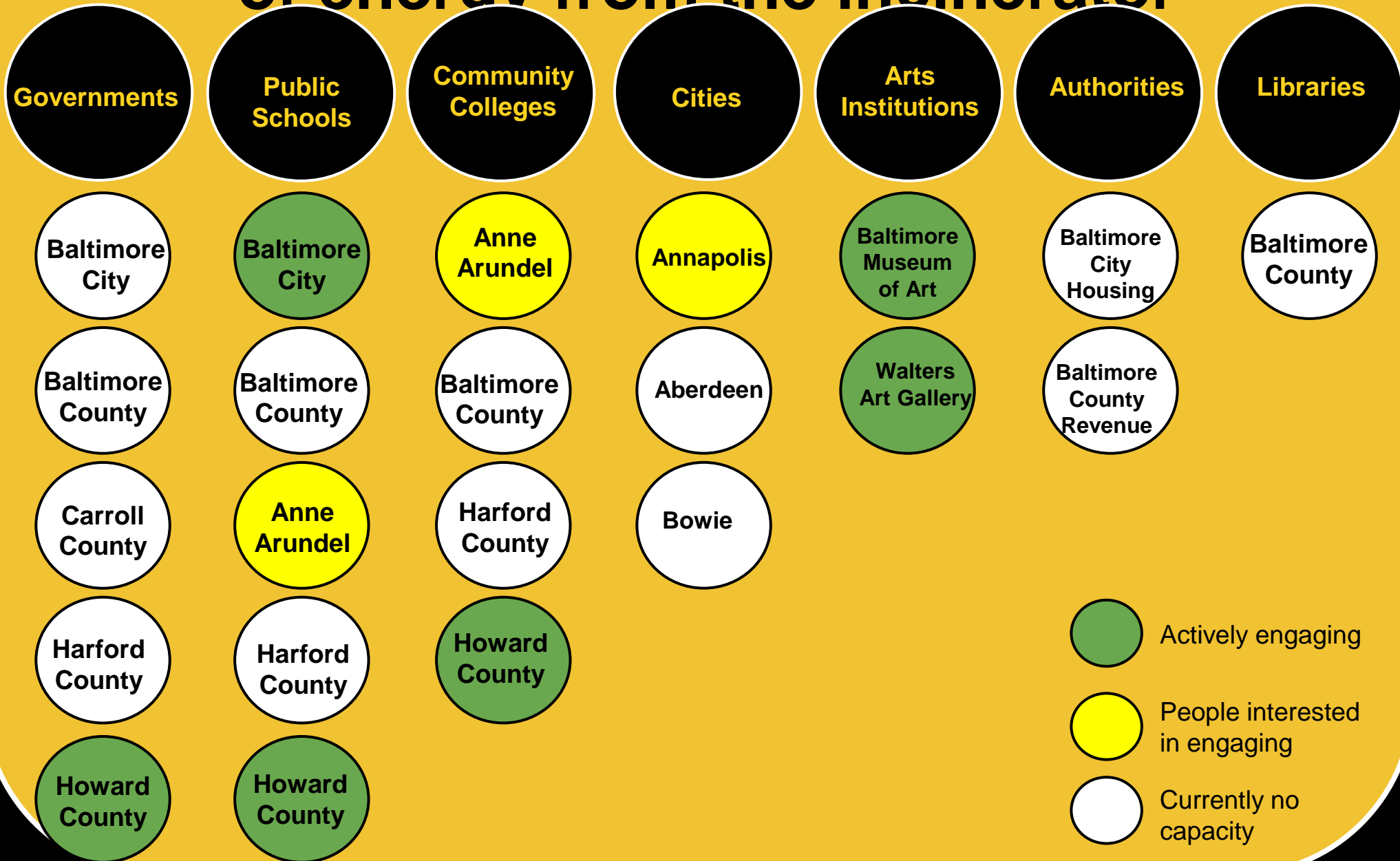
**Baltimore City school board member Cheryl Casciani says, “Energy Answers, when you are standing at the site, unless I was missing something, there’s no evidence of construction.” Then, Casciani recalls, “the day after our site visit, the articles appeared” in the press about EA’s failure to purchase the emission offsets, prompting her to think, “what’s up with Energy Answers missing all these deadlines? What does it mean?”(Baltimore City Paper July 2014)**

**By late 2014 we had built a regional coalition that could build pressure on most of the 22 entities!**

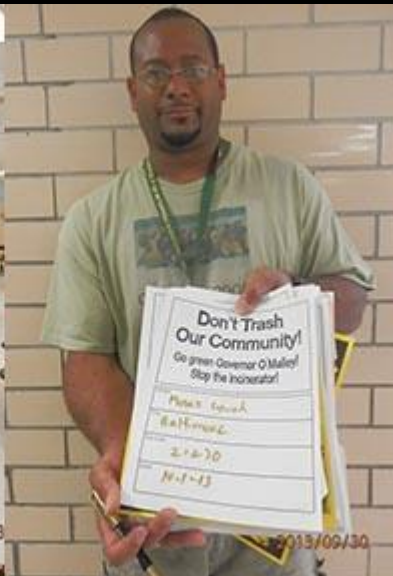
**Together we are reaching out to the entities that would be buying energy from the incinerator. The goal is that public institutions will pledge to opt out in spring of 2015 when the contracts run out.**



# Complete list of public buyers of energy from the incinerator



**We started a petition and gathered thousands  
both online and in person all calling on the entities to make  
the choice to divest**



# **Divestment Victory!**

**For Immediate Release: Thursday, April 9, 2015**

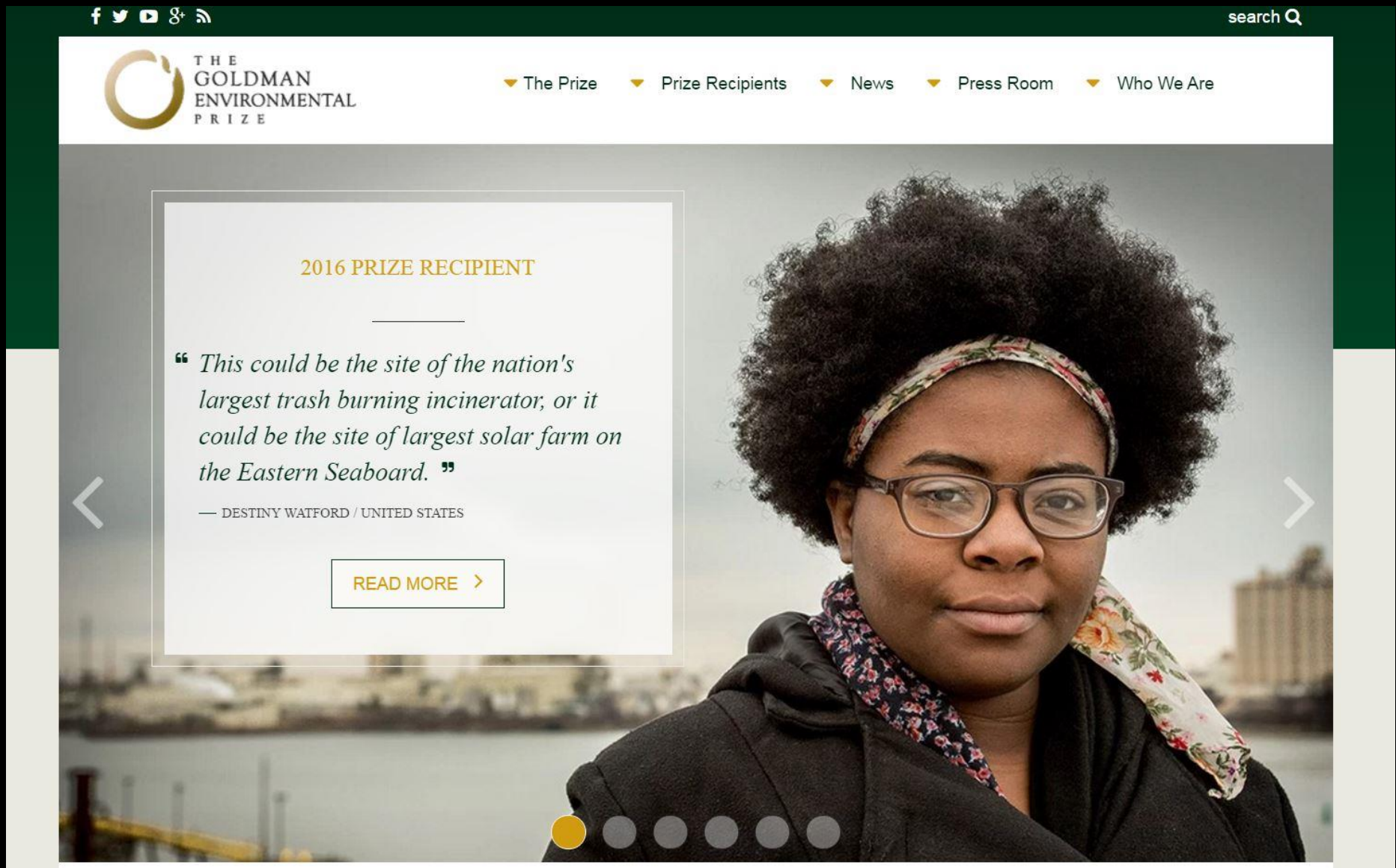
## **Baltimore City Public Schools Withdraws Support for Curtis Bay Waste-Burning Facility**

**“I’ve heard from many of our families and our students, and I hope they understand that their voices matter,” said City Schools CEO, Dr. Gregory Thornton. “For a number of reasons, I remain unconvinced that the current waste-to-energy technology has been adequately tested. Without confidence in the technology, we cannot move forward.”**

# Celebrating victories builds community and helps combat the dumping ground mentality



# Effort honored with world's top award for grassroots environmental organizing!



The screenshot shows the homepage of The Goldman Environmental Prize website. At the top, there is a dark green header with social media icons (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, RSS) on the left and a search bar on the right. Below the header is a white navigation bar with the Goldman Environmental Prize logo on the left and a menu of links: "The Prize", "Prize Recipients", "News", "Press Room", and "Who We Are". The main content area features a large background image of Destiny Watford, a Black woman with a large afro, wearing glasses and a floral headband. On the left side of this image, there is a white text box with the following content: "2016 PRIZE RECIPIENT" in orange, followed by a quote in italics: "This could be the site of the nation's largest trash burning incinerator, or it could be the site of largest solar farm on the Eastern Seaboard." attributed to "— DESTINY WATFORD / UNITED STATES". Below the quote is a "READ MORE >" button. At the bottom of the image, there is a row of six circular indicators, with the first one being yellow and the others grey.

THE GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE

▼ The Prize ▼ Prize Recipients ▼ News ▼ Press Room ▼ Who We Are

2016 PRIZE RECIPIENT

*“ This could be the site of the nation's largest trash burning incinerator, or it could be the site of largest solar farm on the Eastern Seaboard. ”*

— DESTINY WATFORD / UNITED STATES

READ MORE >

# **The problem remains: Baltimore City and the community of Curtis Bay are overburdened with toxic air pollution:**

**Curtis Bay has the highest level of toxic air pollution in Maryland and Baltimore City has the highest rate of air pollution related deaths in the nation.**



# **4x**

**as many people die from air  
pollution related causes  
than homicides in Baltimore  
City each year.**

# **We are still relying on incineration in Baltimore!**

## **BRESCO is the worst polluter in the city**

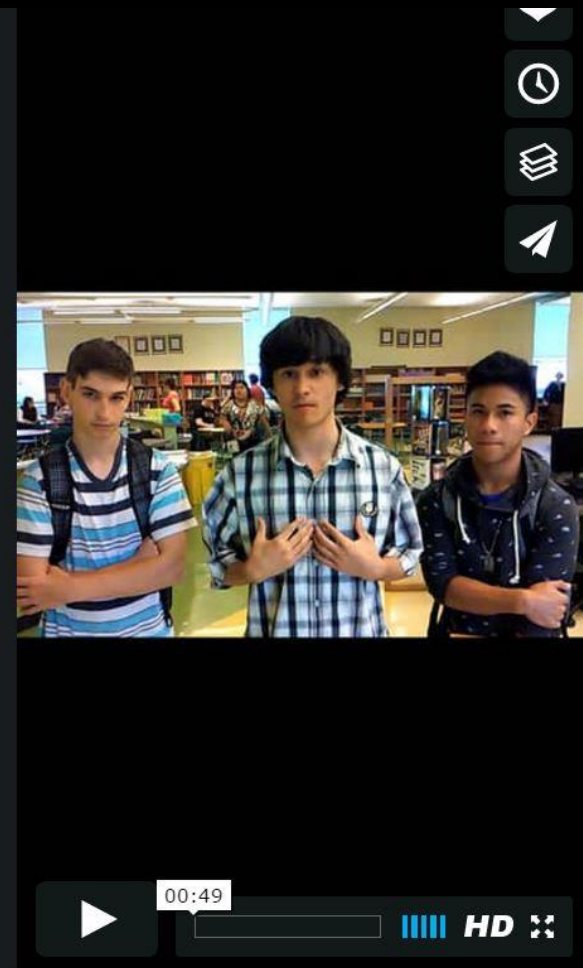
**According to MDE, BRESCO is the worst source of Nitrogen Oxides in the city and the 6th worst in the state (worse than many coal plants). NOx is the primary precursor to ground level ozone, it pollutes the bay, and contributes to climate change.**

**BRESCO is fed by waste that comes from all of us - our institutions like Hopkins, Towson, etc...**

**Our challenge now is to find just and sustainable alternatives to BRESCO: reducing waste, increasing recycling and composting and eliminating the need to invest in massive incinerators.**

# What will it take to create the structural change needed to realize environmental justice?

more organizing  
more research  
more leadership  
more action



**I have asthma, my loved ones have asthma - we need to stop the incinerator!**

from [Free Your Voice](#) 8 months ago | [more](#)