SWANA
SOLID WASTE ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Zeldin,

On behalf of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA), an association of 10,000 members across the waste and resource management industry, congratulations on your confirmation to lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). I am pleased to introduce SWANA and to share the association's key priorities and areas of concern. SWANA is committed to advancing from waste management to resource management through a shared emphasis on education, advocacy, and research.

We are building a stronger waste and resource management industry, empowering our members to deliver essential services to communities today and anticipate their needs for tomorrow. Our members are subject matter experts in a wide range of topics related to landfills, landfill gas, PFAS, waste-to-energy, recycling, organics management, collection of materials, safety, workforce development, and much more.

As you plan the agency's priorities, we urge you to consider the daily importance of waste and resource management. The industry makes modern life convenient, safe, efficient, and sustainable. On behalf of SWANA, I would like to share our views on several topics under the jurisdiction of the EPA for your consideration.

Landfill Management
Modern, engineered landfills are essential for protecting public health and the environment by safely containing society's waste, safeguarding water and soil resources.

A significant number of laws, regulations and permits oversee the operation of landfills. We urge you to set reasonable requirements with a measure of flexibility for landfill operators to continue to operate safely and efficiently. When regulations are excessively complicated or cumbersome, they can restrict the operational efficiency and financial viability of landfills.

In recent years, new technologies for methane detection, measurement and monitoring have been introduced to the field of landfill gas management. Aerial and ground-based methane emissions measurement methods can both play a role. Studies and tests of aerial technologies have had mixed findings on the aerial technologies' consistency and ability to track findings back to a source. These technologies need to be tested and proven before landfills are held accountable to their readings. If the EPA seeks to incorporate new technologies into landfill gas measurement and reporting requirements, we encourage the use of reliable proven measurement technologies and consistent measurement standards.

There is tremendous potential in landfill gas to energy projects. Companies and governments are investing significant amounts of funding into infrastructure to capture landfill gas as a renewable resource. The technology to capture and upgrade landfill gas to RNG continues to advance. Landfill gas will support the EPA goal of moving away from reliance on energy sources from other countries. The federal property tax credits for energy upgrading equipment have been

a helpful tool to support these projects. We encourage the EPA to act as a proponent for continuing these tax credits that support landfill gas infrastructure.

SWANA members are subject matter experts in all aspects of landfill and landfill gas design, management, and operations. We request that the subject matter expertise of these professionals is taken into consideration as the EPA considers new policies that may impact them.

PFAS

SWANA supports the goal of addressing per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination, protecting public health and the environment, and holding manufacturers accountable. Landfills and solid waste disposal sites neither manufacture nor use PFAS; instead, they receive discarded materials containing PFAS that are ubiquitous in residential and commercial waste streams.

The waste and resource management sector has an important role as part of the long-term solution to PFAS management. Landfills provide an environmentally friendly and safe solution for handling PFAS and other emerging materials of concern. Actions that designate certain PFAS compounds as hazardous substances must be accompanied by relief for municipal waste infrastructure. Accordingly, passive receivers of PFAS have been seeking statutory relief from CERCLA liability for owners and operators of passive receiver facilities. This will allow communities to continue to rely on the affordability of the essential public services our sectors provide.

SWANA is offering a new training course titled “Essential Leachate PFAS Treatment and Management Training for Landfill Professionals.” The course provides landfill personnel with an understanding of the PFAS landscape so they can make informed decisions on leachate management and treatment options and requirements. Many landfills are piloting PFAS treatment options while others already have full scale PFAS treatment in place. Our sector is eager to serve as a solution.

EPA is an important leader in supporting technologies for PFAS management. Providing a forum and funding for the research and development of new technology will enable more organizations to implement PFAS detection, treatment, and destruction, which will support clean air, water, and land.

Waste to Energy

Waste to energy (WTE) facilities play an important role in a number of integrated waste management systems. Many communities depend on this critical infrastructure to process their municipal waste and to provide a local source of electricity. As the EPA seeks to decrease reliance on energy sources from other countries, we encourage the support of waste to energy as a local source of energy.

Many companies and communities around the US have invested in WTE, conserving real estate space, reducing emissions, and recovering more metals and energy. Some of these communities are located in areas such as the Northeast where landfilling has been banned or severely restricted. In other areas such as Florida, building landfills may be very difficult and expensive to operate due to natural conditions including high groundwater levels or limited soil availability for daily cover. In areas such as Hawaii, transporting waste long distances is simply not practical and locating a landfill is nearly impossible. WTE provides a practical solution for waste management in these situations.

The proposed “Standards of Performance for New Stationary Sources and Emission Guidelines for Existing Sources: Large Municipal Waste Combustors Voluntary Remand Response and 5-Year Review” would place exceedingly strict requirements on waste to energy facilities, which would be cost-prohibitive for many facilities to meet. There were

several concerns with EPA's proposed regulations as described in the comments submitted by SWANA. We encourage the EPA to recognize the importance of waste to energy systems and to set achievable standards when updating regulations.

Resource Management

SWANA supports the use of domestic renewable resources to create high-quality materials for essential infrastructure and consumer goods. The recycling of packaging and products into new materials, and the processing of organic material into compost and energy are key for supporting supply chains.

The reuse and recycling of materials supports the EPA's goal for every American to have access to clean air, land, and water. Our industry plays a key role in the recycling supply chain, enabling the use of recycled content in creating millions of products and packaging that people rely on every day. Anaerobic digestion of organic materials creates biogas which can be used for energy and heat.

Funding from the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grants is making a difference for communities, states, and territories, enabling them to implement reduction, reuse, and recycling programs, including organics recycling, that they may not have otherwise been able to fund. SWANA encourages the continuation of SWIFR grants. While this funding is historic and significant, the national need still outweighs the funding available.

In addition to funding, SWANA strongly supports the federal government having an active and visible role at the national level to create a stronger, more resilient, and cost-effective national recycling system. EPA is the lead on the implementation of the *National Recycling Strategy* and SWANA encourages the EPA to increase collaboration with other government agencies in implementation. For example, working with other agencies to support markets for recycled materials and private investment in recycling and circular economy infrastructure. SWANA supports EPA's publication of the *National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution* and we encourage the EPA to utilize the knowledge of the individuals and organizations working in waste and resource management to leverage best practices and new ideas.

National collaboration and leadership are necessary to create a more comprehensive, resilient, and cost-effective recycling system. It is important to support the entire system, from design and labeling of materials, through collection and processing, to support for creating viable end products with market demand. Policies and proactive collaboration with manufacturers to design for recycling and to incorporate recycled content into packaging and products will make recycling systems more self-sufficient in the long term.

Lithium-Ion Batteries

Fires caused by lithium-ion batteries are increasingly common in solid waste and recycling facilities and collection vehicles, creating a major safety risk. Loose batteries and batteries embedded in electronic devices can create fires when the device is crushed by the collection and compacting equipment, or dropped or scraped on hard surfaces, among other causes.

This has become an emergency in our industry, causing serious safety concerns and costly property damage. Fires have caused numerous facilities to be inoperable for months at a time, impacting the regions they serve. Insurance rates for waste and recycling facilities have been increasing due to the risk of fires, an additional cost for businesses and organizations that may force them to go out of business. It is also very important to identify options to recover lithium-ion batteries which contain valuable minerals that should be recycled, decreasing the need to source these materials from China and other countries.

The EPA has important work underway on battery collection best practices and labeling guidelines. The working sessions hosted by the EPA on batteries have brought together a wide range of stakeholders and has resulted in helpful resources. We encourage the EPA to continue and to expand this vial work.

Workforce
The safety of our workers is our highest priority. We are leading on safety through robust training, industry innovation and setting ambitious standards. Our industry creates jobs that require individuals with a wide range of expertise and skillsets. Projects in the industry create local jobs and boost local economies. We encourage EPA to support programs that provide training for the many skilled trades and professions in the waste and resource management industry.

Conclusion
EPA brings tremendous value in its ability to bring together stakeholders, facilitating innovation and new jobs. SWANA looks forward to working with you and offering our expertise as a resource to EPA.

I would welcome the opportunity discuss these critical issues with you, along with representatives of our membership. I invite you to tour our landfills, waste to energy plants, recycling facilities, and other facilities to see the impressive technology and hard-working professionals at these sites. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

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Congratulations again on your confirmation, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Amy Lestition Burke, MA, FASAE, CAE