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Contacts:

Amy Sharma, Science for Georgia, amy.sharma@sci4ga.org

Evan Brockman, Georgia Clinicians for Climate Action, evanbrockmanmd@gacca.org

Jessica Wahl, Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center, jwahl@environmentgeorgia.org,

404-694-6232

Dozens sign letter raising environmental, health concerns over proposed plastic-to-fuel and plastic-to-chemical plants in Georgia

39 scientists, health professionals and environmental organizations condemn harmful plastic waste management processes that pose as “recycling,” call on leaders to weigh scientific evidence over industry greenwashing

ATLANTA – Thirty-nine members of the science, engineering, health and environmental communities raised concerns about proposals for plastics-to-fuel and plastic-to-chemical plants in Georgia in [an open letter](#) released Thursday. Along with Georgia doctors and environmental health experts, former Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Judith Enck and groups such as Georgia Clinicians for Climate Action, the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter and Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center signed the letter.

The letter comes on the heels of a decision by the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority last week to [end its relationship](#) with Brightmark, a company that was working to build the world’s largest plastics-to-fuel facility just north of the Middle Georgia Regional Airport. The county’s decision was influenced by the failure of Brightmark’s much smaller plant in Indiana to deliver proof of concept.

"The medical community was especially concerned about the negative health impacts from increased exposure to toxins and air pollution that would likely result from the proposed facility," said Chair of Georgia Clinicians for Climate Action Dr. Evan Brockman in reference to Brightmark’s proposal to burn plastic trash to create diesel and other fuels in Macon, Georgia. "The location near schools and daycares was particularly worrisome since children are more vulnerable to the effects of air pollution and their brains and bodies are still developing."

The letter, addressed to Georgia elected officials and leaders at the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, calls on decision makers to consider the negative health and environmental impacts of plants that incinerate and dissolve plastic waste as they review proposals for these facilities in Macon and Augusta.

Although Macon recently rejected Brightmark's plastic-to-fuel proposal, [The Macon Newsroom reported](#) that the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority has "agreed to cooperate with potential efforts to build a Brightmark plant somewhere else in Georgia, with the agreement of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs," indicating that the industry is still a threat.

The scientists, engineers, public health experts and medical doctors who signed the open letter state that the technologies to convert plastic trash into fuels and chemicals is unproven and unsustainable. Their chief concern is that these plants would be a major source of air pollution and harm the health and quality of life of those in surrounding communities.

"This is a clear case where the science shows no inherent benefit, and where the technology in question is unproven," said Science for Georgia Executive Director Dr. Amy Sharma, who helped to draft the letter.

In addition to the plastic-to-fuel plant proposed in Macon-Bibb by the company Brightmark, the company PureCycle has announced plans to build a \$440 million plastic waste management facility on 200 acres in the Augusta Corporate Park. The company claims it would turn plastic trash made from polypropylene, a common type of plastic, into resins and chemicals using solvents and high-pressure.

"Brightmark and PureCycle are portraying the plastic-to-fuel and plastic-to-chemical plants they want to build in Georgia as recycling," said Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center Clean Energy Associate Jessica Wahl. "But these facilities poison the environment and the communities where they are located, and they only exacerbate our larger plastic waste and climate crises. Nothing is sustainable or healthy about manufacturing plastics from fossil fuels and chemicals, transporting them thousands of miles using fossil fuels, and then using an energy-intensive, untested process powered by fossil fuels to burn and dissolve them."

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Science for Georgia is a nonprofit organization that works to bridge science and society through communication training, outreach, and advocating for the responsible use of science in public policy and programs.

Georgia Clinicians for Climate Action is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization of current, future, and retired Georgia health professionals dedicated to improving the understanding of the health impacts of climate change and the health benefits of climate solutions.

Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center works for clean air, clean water, clean energy, wildlife and open spaces, and a livable climate. Our members across the state put grassroots support behind our research and advocacy.