

Committees: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB 332 - “Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources”

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George’s

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 4, 2021

Climate Parents of Prince George’s supports HB 332, removal of waste-to-energy incineration from “Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources.”

Merriam-Webster defines something renewable as “capable of being replaced by natural ecological cycles or sound management practices.” Other dictionaries take a similar approach. One thing is clear is that the creation of trash is not “renewable” when relying on any conventional definition.

Subsidizing waste-to-energy as part of the Tier 1 sources under Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) just goes to pollute an otherwise noble goal that the Maryland General Assembly has laid out and a correction is needed to create a healthier place for our children to live, learn, and grow in.

One particular concern with subsidizing waste-to-energy is its effect on the health of children. In *Waste Incineration & Public Health*¹ a review of research on the impacts of waste incineration was conducted. One study conducted in Taiwan found that “‘the high level of air-pollution’ in the population close to the incinerator was associated with a detrimental effect on lung function in primary-school children. They also found that older, poorly controlled waste-to-energy incinerators would lead to substantial increases in the risk of cancer. This is not the goal of the RPS and we must correct it.

One of the two waste-to-energy plants in Maryland was found, in 2011, to produce more mercury, lead, and greenhouse gases per hour of energy than each of the state’s four largest coal-fired power plants. The goal of the RPS is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and produce energy with little to no negative health effects, not to produce more pollution than coal powered plants. Waste-to-energy does not match the goal of the RPS.

One could try to make the case, though they shouldn’t, that refuse is a renewable fuel stock. We as a society should be producing less trash. And that is happening. In fact, in 2019 one of Maryland’s waste-to-energy plants sued Baltimore County for not sending enough trash to the facility.² This is evidence alone that our trash is not a “renewable” resource.

Continuing to subsidize waste-to-energy as a Tier 1 renewable energy resource is just wrong. It harms the health of Marylanders, in particular children living in its wake, produces high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and has been shown to be powered by a resource that is not renewable under the basest definition.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

¹ National Research Council (US) Committee on Health Effects of Waste Incineration. *Waste Incineration & Public Health*. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2000. 5, Understanding Health Effects of Incineration. Available from:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK233619/>

² <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-county/ph-tt-wheelabrator-0417-story.html>