

Support House Bill 332

Clean Up the RPS Remove Waste Incineration and Refuse-Dreived

Testimony Supporting House Bill 332

Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Eligible Sources

House Environment & Transportation Committee / Senate Finance

Hearing Date: February 4, 2021

Sponsor: Delegate Ivey

Position: SUPPORT

Community Research is a Maryland-based nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting sustainability, protecting communities, public health and the environment, and promoting good government. We have worked with many other organizations in several Maryland jurisdictions to fight proposed incinerators and to advance resource management policies and programs that reduce waste at its source and expand reuse, refurbishment, recycling and composting. These strategies conserve materials and energy, reduce pollution and protect public health, save local jurisdictions money, and strengthen local economies by creating local jobs and revenues.

We respectfully urge the Committee to issue a Favorable report on House Bill 332, and we urge committee members to work for its passage by the House of Delegates. We thank and commend Delegate Ivey for introducing this important, common-sense legislation to remove burning trash and refuse-derived fuel from the Maryland Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS). We also thank and commend Committee Chair Davis for introducing House Bill 875, which would remove burning mill residue (black liquor) from paper mills from the RPS. Together and alone, these two bills offer the General Assembly a critical opportunity to clean up, and bring integrity, honesty and common sense to, Maryland's RPS.

The RPS can and should be a powerful tool for reducing air pollution, protecting public health, fighting global warming, creating a sustainable economy, and giving families and businesses greater access to clean renewable energy. Yet from its passage in 2004, the RPS has been contaminated with, and had provided massive subsidies for, trash incineration and other polluting technologies, at the expense of Maryland rate payers. And over the years, it has become more contaminated as the State has added more dirty technologies, and elevated trash incineration from Tier 2 to Tier 1, placing it on par with wind and solar. As a result, Maryland communities and ratepayers have been forced to waste millions of dollars subsidizing incineration and other dirty technologies.

Incineration – More Expensive Than Wind, Dirtier Than Coal and Not Renewable

Incineration is neither clean nor renewable. Megawatt for megawatt, incineration generates more greenhouse gases and more lead, mercury, dioxin and other highly toxic air pollutants than coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel. Official emissions reports for the Montgomery County incinerator shows that megawatt for megawatt burning trash in that incinerator generates more than twice as much carbon dioxide than does burning coal, and that for every ton of trash the County burns there, it

releases roughly 1.3 tons of carbon dioxide. Official data shows that trash incineration accounts for roughly 80 percent of the carbon pollution released by Tier 1 sources in the RPS.

Incineration also is the most expensive way to generate electricity – more expensive than wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric, coal, gas and nuclear energy – according to a report published by the U.S. Department of Energy, which examined the capital and operating costs of more than two dozen ways to generate electricity.

Incineration generally is the most expensive way to manage discards – more expensive than reducing waste (of course), recycling, composting and landfilling. Because incinerators are so expensive and because they so often are funded through massive public debt, they create huge demands for trash and cash, burden communities with enormous, sometimes unsustainable, debt, and often undermine efforts to reduce waste, recycle and compost.

Every year, Maryland's incinerators burn hundreds of thousands of tons of resources that could otherwise be recycled or composted. Recycling and composting those resources would create far more local jobs and revenues. By burning those resources instead of recycling and composting them, we waste the opportunity to build our local and state economies by creating local jobs and generating local revenues.

Incineration does *not* eliminate the need for landfills because some materials cannot be handled well by incinerators and are sent directly to landfills, and because the ash from an incinerator must be disposed of, almost always in a landfill. Data from Montgomery County and the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority show that for every 100 tons the County burns in its incinerator, it sends roughly 30 tons of ash to a landfill. That ash is laden with lead, mercury, dioxins, and other highly toxic and carcinogenic contaminants.

So the choice in this narrow sense is not whether to burn or bury. It is whether to bury or burn *and* bury.

Incineration is an expensive and polluting way to reduce methane emissions from landfills. The most efficient, cost-effective is to divert compostable and recyclable organic materials, including yard, waste and paper, from landfills. Those are the materials that decompose in landfills to generate methane *and* carbon dioxide. The US EPA estimates that diverting these materials from landfills can reduce methane production by 96 percent.