

Testimony Supporting HB332
House Economic Matters Committee
February 4, 2021

Position: SUPPORT

As a resident of the 42nd district and a Maryland ratepayer, I support HB332 and all efforts to remove trash incineration from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). Burning trash is not clean energy, and Maryland's renewable energy subsidies should be used to support truly green energy like wind and solar and geothermal. Even though BRESKO is now required by a legal settlement to somewhat reduce its emissions, it will still emit harmful amounts of neurotoxins like mercury and carcinogens like dioxins throughout its operation. The risks of incinerating household and commercial waste are proven.

Trash Incineration harms our health, lowers life expectancy, and causes health care costs to skyrocket. Trash incineration blights neighborhoods and depresses property values. Trash incineration has harmed the climate and will continue to do so unless we put a stop to it.

My family moved to Baltimore from upstate New York in the late 1980's. Our eyes, noses and lungs immediately noticed the City's air pollution. Our medical and pharmacy bills rose significantly. In the early 1990's I had the opportunity to tour one of the causes of this pollution, namely the BRESKO Incinerator. I also visited the Quarantine Road landfill where I took samples of the output of the BRESKO and Pulaski Highway incinerators. These increased my concern about the air pollution we were breathing in every day. Along with many concerned residents I campaigned and rallied for the closure of the Pulaski facility. It finally shut down in 1995 -- 25 years ago. BRESKO has continued to poison our air for all those 25 years. In spite of this, incinerators were added to the list of Tier 1 renewable energy sources in 2011. As "renewable energy" BRESKO has qualified for subsidies ever since. We must put an end to this ripoff. No one should have to pay to pollute their own community.

I am convinced that climate change is the most important issue in human history. If we don't act immediately to move toward 100% clean energy, our children and grandchildren will not have a future. They understand how crucial it is to change the status quo and to do it now. Their school strikes, rallies, marches et al. are not stunts. They are scared to death. Removing incinerators from Tier 1 of Maryland's RPS is an important step toward increasing our State's commitment to addressing climate change. In itself HB 332 will not close down incinerators, but the millions spent on subsidies are better applied to actual renewable energy projects. The state can also provide support to alternative clean methods of trash disposal. There are models for doing just this throughout our State.

Baltimore city's 2019 Sustainability Plan includes the goal of diverting 90% of waste from incinerators and landfills and increasing recycling from 20 to 80 percent. In Carroll County, New Windsor is piloting a "pay as you throw" program that, as of January, resulted in a 44% decrease in solid waste. Prince George's County hosts the East Coast's largest composting facility and boasts the highest waste diversion rate in the State. Communities across Maryland are working actively to develop the recycling, composting, reuse, and reduction programs to manage waste streams in ways that are less polluting and more cost-effective than trash incineration.

For all of these reasons and many more, I urge the House Economic Matters Committee to support HB332 and end subsidies for trash incineration in Maryland. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Sharon Davlin