



Committee: Economic Matters
Testimony on: HB0332 - “Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards -- Eligible Sources”
Organization: MLC Climate Justice Wing
Person
Submitting: Diana Younts, co-chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 4, 2021

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0332. MLC’s Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and grasstops organizations focused on getting State level climate justice legislation passed. Each bill for which we advocate is evaluated through an equity lens, with a particular focus on how disadvantaged communities are affected by the bill and the bill’s climate impact.

We urge you to support the proposed bill to remove incineration from the Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) for three reasons: 1) burning trash is displacing clean energy in the RPS; 2) burning trash is not clean; and 3) burning trash is not healthy.

As Speaker Adrienne Jones said recently, “climate change is an existential threat” and removing [dirty energy] from the RPS is an “important first step” in addressing it. Energy from incinerators emits almost five times the greenhouse gases than energy created by black liquor. *See* [Department of Natural Resources Final RPS Report 2019, Table 2-8](#). And indeed, as discussed more fully below, incineration is more polluting than coal. So, it is important that both incineration and black liquor be removed from the RPS and that they not be allowed to be subsidized or to displace clean energy.

Incineration is Displacing Clean Energy. A shockingly large and *growing* percentage of Maryland’s renewable “clean energy” comes from high-polluting energy sources. Maryland’s percentage of energy from dirty sources (incineration, black liquor, biomass) in the tier 1RPS *grew from 33% in 2018 to 40% in 2019*. In 2019 alone, Maryland paid over \$32 million to buy renewable energy credits from dirty energy sources. *See* Report [here](#).

Burning Trash is *Dirtier* Than Coal. Burning trash is not clean energy: to produce the same amount of energy, trash incinerators emit more greenhouse gases than coal plants do. Trash incinerators are the dirtiest way to make electricity by most air pollution measures. Even with air pollution control equipment in place, trash incinerators emit more pollution than (largely uncontrolled) coal power plants per unit of energy produced.

To produce the same amount of energy as coal power plants in Maryland, the Montgomery County incinerator -- operated by Covanta -- releases 15% more fine particulate matter, 60% more arsenic, 68% more greenhouse gasses, and 94% more nitrogen oxide (which triggers asthma), 3.5 times the amount of chromium, 11 times more lead, 21 times more cadmium, 26 times more mercury, and 50 times more hydrochloric acid than a coal plant. Incinerators release 3.1 times the amount of mercury as landfills. The Wheelabrator incinerator in Baltimore is similarly polluting.

Incinerators Are Not Healthy: Health data studied in Baltimore strongly supports that incinerators sicken Marylanders. In December 2017, the Abell Foundation, in conjunction with the Environmental Integrity Project, published a study entitled “Asthma and Air Pollution in Baltimore City.” The study found that Baltimore’s asthma rate is three times greater than the rest of Maryland and that the highest incidence of asthma occurred in those zip codes that are adjacent to major emitters of air pollution: 21230, in which the Wheelabrator incinerator is located, and 21226, in which has other major facilities are located. Similarly, the Dickerson trash incinerator is the single largest industrial emitter of air pollutants in Montgomery County. This facility produces approximately 740 tons of air pollutants and sends 180,000 tons of toxic ash to landfills in Virginia.

Trash incineration and other dirty energy in the RPS contributes to air pollution that harms Marylanders’ health and all Maryland ratepayers subsidize that pollution to the tune of \$32 million per year. Marylanders should not have to pay that price.

For these reasons, we urge you to support HB0332 and remove incineration from the Renewable Portfolio Standards.

MLC Climate Justice Wing:

Maryland Legislative Coalition
MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
WISE
Frack Free Frostburg
Mountain Maryland Movement
Clean Water Action
Maryland Sierra Club

Howard County Indivisible
Howard County Sierra Club

Columbia Association Climate change and sustainability advisory committee
HoCo Climate Action
CHEER
Climate XChange - Maryland
Mid-Atlantic Field Representative/

National Parks Conservation Association
350 Montgomery County
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for
Climate Solutions
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment
Committee
Audubon Naturalist Society
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Environmental Justice Ministry
Coalition For Smarter Growth
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
MCPS Clean Energy Campaign
Montgomery County DCC
Potomac Conservancy
Casa de Maryland

Nuclear Information & Resource Service
Clean Air Prince Georges
Ji'Aire's Workgroup
Laurel Resist
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Unitarian Universalist Legislative
Ministry of Maryland
Concerned Citizens Against Industrial Cafos
Wicomico NAACP
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Chispa MD
Climate Law & Policy Project
Poor Peoples Campaign
Labor for Sustainability
The Nature Conservancy
Clean Air Prince Georges
350 Baltimore