



Feb 16, 2021

Testimony on HB0875  
***Electricity - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Qualifying Biomass***  
***House Economic Matters Committee***

**Position: Favorable with Amendment**

I am writing as a member of Sunrise Movement Baltimore, the Baltimore City hub of the national youth-led movement to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process. I urge your favorable report for HB0875, Electricity - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Qualifying Biomass, and to adopt an amendment to also remove trash incineration from eligibility for renewable energy subsidies.

Ending greenhouse gas-emitting power production in favor of renewable energy is a vital strategy for avoiding the worst effects of the climate crisis in the short time we have to make a difference -- less than 10 years. The stakes are very high, especially for young people, who face the prospect of food shortages, higher rates of weather-driven devastation including fires and flooding, and other crises that will shape their lives and those of their children, and their children's children.

As the COVID pandemic has starkly revealed, so-called "external" crises tend to worsen and compound the existing health, economic, racial and other injustices already harming Maryland communities. In Baltimore we are already seeing the climate crisis disproportionately hitting our low-income communities and Black and brown communities first and worst, with extreme flooding during storms and heat island effects that contribute to exacerbated respiratory disease, higher health care costs, missed work days, and higher rates of illness and death. All of these problems also translate to higher costs for business and government, creating a drag on our economy.

Maryland needs to grow our renewable energy capacity faster. An important step is making sure money set aside to support renewable energy is not instead actually funding operations that are making the climate crisis worse.

Unfortunately, that's exactly the situation before us right now. Black liquor, the toxic sludge left as a byproduct of paper mill, emits carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide, polluting our atmosphere and worsening the climate crisis. Removing this source of energy from eligibility for renewable energy credits is vital in order to clean up our renewable energy portfolio.

For the same reasons we need to remove black liquor from the Renewable Portfolio Standard, we also need to remove trash incineration from the RPS. For every kilowatt hour of energy produced, so-called "waste-to-energy" trash incineration produces more greenhouse gases and toxins than coal.(1) That fact alone should remove trash incineration from eligibility for clean renewable energy subsidies.

But the situation is even worse: trash incineration is actively causing increased rates of illness and death in Maryland communities. Air pollution from the City of Baltimore's BRESKO



Wheelabrator trash incinerator alone is responsible for \$55 million in added health care costs per year(2). The illnesses caused by air pollution in the region disproportionately affect low-income and Black and brown communities, just like the effects of climate change.

The good news: better alternatives exist, both for energy generation and solid waste management. We can replace the relatively low amount of energy produced by trash incineration with truly clean renewable energy sources like wind and solar -- provided these industries receive the support they need to expand as rapidly as the climate crisis requires.

For solid waste management, a zero waste strategy (reduce, reuse, recycle, compost) is the 21st century alternative to reliance on incineration and landfilling, and would create more jobs than our current systems, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality and quality of life.(3)

Please do not think that Maryland state policymakers do not have a crucial -- essential -- role to play in addressing the harm the climate crisis is already bringing to our state. You have real power to make a difference.

The renewable energy portfolio should support the conversion of Maryland's energy sector to technologies that do not produce greenhouse gases and do not create or exacerbate human illness. Black liquor and trash incineration have no place alongside wind and solar in our clean, green renewable energy future.

For the people, for human health, for economic and racial justice in our communities, for the health of the economy, and for the fight to reduce the harm of the climate crisis, I urge you to grant a favorable report for this important legislation and adopt an amendment to remove trash incineration from the RPS. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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[http://environmentalintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2011-10\\_WTE\\_Incinerator.pdf](http://environmentalintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2011-10_WTE_Incinerator.pdf)
2. Chesapeake Bay Foundation (Press release). *CBF Study: Baltimore Incinerator Causes \$55 Million in Health Problems Per Year*. December 2017.  
<https://www.cbf.org/news-media/newsroom/2017/maryland/cbf-study-baltimore-incinerator-causes-55-million-in-health-problems-per-year.html>
3. Institute for Local Self-Reliance. *Baltimore's Fair Development Plan for Zero Waste*. February 2020. <https://ilsr.org/report-baltimore-zero-waste/>