



RISE, RECLAIM, REBUILD

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Testimony Supporting HB11
House Economic Matters Committee
March 4, 2022

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

As a resident of District 46 and *the Executive Director of the South Baltimore Community Land Trust (SBCLT) Inc*, I am writing to express my strong support of HB11, which will make sure that our subsidies for renewable energy through the Renewable Portfolio Standard are going toward actual renewable energy. We are in a climate crisis, and we cannot afford to be spending our renewable energy money on facilities that emit greenhouse gasses - now is the time to double down Maryland's commitment to truly renewable energy and subsidize only facilities that are emissions-free. SBCLT and the Communities in South Baltimore have borne the burden of toxic emissions from Incineration for 37 years! Incineration is not renewable and subsidies should be removed immediately.

Burning trash, chicken litter, and wood waste and manufacturing methane all pollute the environment, harm nearby communities' health, and contribute to climate change: a bad investment of public dollars that every Maryland utility ratepayer contributes to. Every Renewable Energy Credit that goes toward a facility that emits greenhouse gasses is a Renewable Energy Credit taken away from a facility that does not - an egregious waste of public money.

Because of the inclusion of these polluters in the Renewable Portfolio Standard, Maryland ratepayers paid over \$30 million to buy Renewable Energy Credits from facilities that emit greenhouse gasses in 2020, and over \$246 million since 2008. The Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility estimates that if nothing changes, those costs will mount to half a billion dollars subsidizing polluters by 2030. Please support HB11 so that those dollars can go toward supporting wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal power - not greenhouse gas emissions.

As a resident, ED, and leader in the South Baltimore Community this issue is of great concern. Long term exposure to incineration and other polluting companies puts our lives at greater risk and causes us to be more susceptible to respiratory illnesses. I watched my neighbor succumb to the demise from Lung Cancer, she never smoked. I could only think if her life could have been prolonged if we did not live in a neighborhood that incentivizes toxic polluting companies.

Moreover, we want to be clear that as an individual and organization subsidizing dirty energy should be a criminal act. The time is now to put the lives of citizens first and stand up against the big industry that makes millions while community health declines.

Subsidizing dirty energy is a bad deal for Maryland.

- In 2020, about 25% of Maryland's Renewable Energy Credits came from polluting energy sources that are still a part of the RPS, such as municipal solid waste burned to produce electricity and woody biomass or debris burned in power plants and paper mills. An additional 11% of Renewable Energy Credits went to black liquor, which the General Assembly deleted from the RPS in 2021 - now it's time to finish the job.
- In its 2019 [report](#) reviewing the RPS in response to 2017's HB1414, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources found that the pollution from combustion-based energy sources included in the RPS is so great that Maryland RPS energy sources, on average, pollute as much or more SO₂ and NO_x than the grid as a whole - pollutants that significantly contribute to asthma and other health hazards.

Subsidizing trash incineration and landfill gas tilts the playing field against healthier, cheaper waste management.

- When the RPS was created in 2004, trash incineration was in "Tier 2" of the RPS and received lower subsidies than the actually renewable energy in Tier 1, and those smaller subsidies were to be phased out by 2019. It wasn't until 2011, in response to intense industry pressure, that incineration was made permanently a part of the same subsidized category as wind and solar.
- New trash incinerators were proposed for Baltimore City and Frederick and Carroll Counties, but residents campaigned and prevented them from being built because of the enormous pollution burden and economic costs they would have brought. In Baltimore City and Montgomery County, home of Maryland's remaining incinerators, residents are actively campaigning to close them as well.
- Air pollutants from waste incinerators increase the risk of pre-term births, cancers of the blood and lung, and emergency room visits. The process of incinerating trash creates an especially dangerous set of compounds called dioxins, [declared by the World Health Organization as a known human carcinogen](#); dioxins are also linked to diseases of the immune system, endocrine system, nervous system, and reproductive system. According to a Chesapeake Bay Foundation commissioned study, fine particulate matter emitted from the Wheelabrator Baltimore "waste-to-energy facility" causes over \$55 million in adverse health effects annually.
- To produce the same amount of energy, Maryland's two subsidy-receiving incinerators emit higher levels of mercury, lead, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), carbon monoxide (CO), and carbon dioxide (CO₂) than Maryland's coal plants. In 2015, the BRESKO incinerator in Baltimore emitted about twice as much greenhouse gasses per amount of energy produced, on average, as each of the coal plants located in Maryland.

- *In 2020, the most recent data available, 61.5% of Maryland's RPS subsidies for trash incineration went to an incinerator outside of Maryland in Lorton, VA.*
- *Artificial subsidies make incinerators seem artificially cheaper compared to methods of managing our waste that produce neither pollution nor energy: like composting, repurposing, and source reduction. Although trash incineration and producing methane from waste receive RPS subsidies for producing energy despite their pollution impacts, composting is better for the environment than either. [According to the EPA](#): "composting lowers greenhouse gasses by improving carbon sequestration in the soil and by preventing methane emissions through aerobic decomposition, as methane-producing microbes are not active in the presence of oxygen." 50% of the average municipal waste stream can be composted.*

For all of these reasons and many more, please support HB11 and end "renewable energy" subsidies for greenhouse gas emitting energy sources in Maryland. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Meleny Thomas

Meleny Thomas, Executive Director
South Baltimore Community Land Trust
And resident in District 46