



## Testimony Supporting HB11- Reclaim Renewable Energy Act

March 4th, 2022

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB11 on behalf of Socially Responsible Agriculture Project. I am the Regional Representative in the Delmarva Region, but am also here representing Sentinels Of Eastern Shore Health, based on the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland and Sussex Health & Environmental Network in Sussex County, Delaware. Our coalition members unify a collective voice for positive solutions and inclusiveness in working towards healthy solutions. Our vision of healthy communities include environmental health, public health, economic health and social health.

We are beyond concerned with the number of anaerobic digestors/biogas projects that are not only popping up in Sussex County, Delaware, but also on the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland. They are targeting low-income brown and black communities, many with language barriers, already dealing with more than their fair share of polluting industries.

There is a pattern of representing biogas projects as a way to help our small farmers with their litter and the runoff which is currently contaminating our wells and streams.

Why is this the case?

There are 3 reasons;

1. The first is Industry uses sympathy for our family farmers whose livelihoods are being devastated now to garner support from legislators.
2. The thought of helping a farmer with their litter problem is much more palatable than describing the actual scope of the project which reveals that poultry processing plant waste and municipal waste will be the majority of the feedstock for these plants.

3. The third is public money being allocated to help the small farmer sounds more reasonable than using our tax money to fund multi-billion dollar industries who have a pattern of contaminating the communities in which they set up shop.

I feel that it is important that you have an accurate picture of what is happening in our communities as endless dollars are being spent on clever marketing and wordsmithing. There has been a pattern of both the inputs and scope of these projects being misrepresented to get local zoning in place.

These facilities are being represented as: “An Alternative to Land Application, Enhanced Air Quality, Safe Water Quality, Economic Development Opportunities and Healthy and Safe Living”<sup>1</sup>

First I would like to address “An Alternative to Land Application” and “Safe Water Quality.”

There is an end product from this process, which is a digestate, **which still has to be land applied**. This is not an alternative to land application. The digestate is more water soluble, so there is a greater risk of contamination to our streams and wells.

Next I want to address their claim of “Enhanced Air Quality.”

There are emissions from these processes and there is a history of these operations not meeting their permit levels.<sup>2</sup> There are also air quality concerns with the 20,000 to 30,000 tanker trucks bringing in the waste from the inputs, which can be poultry processing plant waste, sewage, and poultry litter. There is also a potential for road damage that will fall on taxpayers with the 24/7 influx of trucks.

Are there “Economic Development Opportunities?”

The Bioenergy facility will provide some temporary construction jobs and requires minimal staff to run the operation. There are greater job opportunities provided with the more sustainable renewable sources in Tier 1 in direct job creation, such as wind, solar, and geothermal energy projects.

---

<sup>1</sup> Quote from “Bioenergy Innovation Project Anaerobic Digestion, What Does This Mean For Your Community?”

<https://www.bioenergyic.com/anaerobic-digestion-project>

<sup>2</sup> Example of anaerobic digester not complying with permitted levels. - “The Charlotte Observer, Robeson County ‘renewable energy’ plant criticized for being a ‘major polluter’”

[https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article258652993.html?fbclid=IwAR3kvDkFNbJa-5BHKseBq\\_5T72BGrfVmtmn2bXIPDXkk7yP\\_c8b053gyMII](https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article258652993.html?fbclid=IwAR3kvDkFNbJa-5BHKseBq_5T72BGrfVmtmn2bXIPDXkk7yP_c8b053gyMII)

“Healthy and Safe Living” has no place being in their marketing materials. There are risks of explosions as these are basically refineries being constructed in our neighborhoods, which are zoned for agriculture and single residential homes. Last week I testified at a local zoning hearing on land being re-zoned for industrial zoning where children in a majority black school will be swinging on their elementary school swings while looking at Eastern Shore Natural Gas on the parcel next door as a result of this “renewable energy” project if this expansion occurs.<sup>3</sup>

The result of including anaerobic digestors and biogas as part of Maryland’s renewable energy standard will be an industry gold rush on taxpayer money that will ultimately cause more pollution as we see investors already buying and building 12-20 650 foot poultry houses on one parcel, (mega CAFO developments) which replace the livelihoods of our Eastern Shore family farmers that cannot compete. These factory farm biogas facilities must be fed 24/7 and are further entrenching an unsustainable system that is locking us into 20 year contracts with this industry’s next newest failed solution. We don’t have time to tinker around the edges of a process that could accelerate climate change. Sea levels are already wreaking havoc on our Eastern Shore communities.

We are asking that you stand with the families who will be impacted and urge a favorable report on HB11. I believe that this is a pivotal moment for the future of Maryland, for the future of our climate, and for the future generations to come.

Please support HB11.

Thank you for your consideration

Maria Payan  
Regional Representative  
Socially Responsible Agriculture Project

---

<sup>3</sup> DelawarePublic Media, “Expansion of Eastern Shore Natural Gas facility in Bridgeville on hold”  
<https://www.delawarepublic.org/delaware-headlines/2022-02-21/expansion-of-eastern-shore-natural-gas-facility-in-bridgeville-on-hold>