



Testimony Supporting HB0011

*Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Tier 1 Renewable Source – Alterations
(Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2022)*

House Economic Matters Committee

March 4, 2022

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing as a resident of District 43 in the City of Baltimore, a Maryland energy ratepayer, and a member of Sunrise Movement Baltimore, to urge your favorable report for HB0011, the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2022.

Sunrise Movement Baltimore is the local hub of a national youth-led movement to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process. Preventing climate change is not possible. It's already killing people in Baltimore and elsewhere, reducing food production in the U.S. and around the world, and wreaking havoc in the form of destructive wildfires, extreme heat and flooding, and more. What we are really fighting for is sweeping federal actions and international cooperation to halt our trajectory toward the worst effects of climate change.

But in no way does that let states and localities off the hook. That's where this committee comes in.

Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard could be a shining example of Maryland leadership. Right now, however, it is fake news, and a national embarrassment, a betrayal of good intentions. We're funding polluters instead of providing robust support for our state's transition to a renewable energy economy and significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. That's a failure, and it's a failure you can fix.

We've met with lawmakers who ask things like "what will we do with the trash?" and "why not get power from chicken poop, as long as it's already being produced?" We are fighting those battles in our advocacy around other legislation that is not before you. It would be irresponsible, of course, not to consider the unintended consequences of any bill, but that assumes that we haven't thought this through.

The climate crisis is being driven by thousands of interrelated systems, including waste management, energy production, and agriculture. Currently they're driving us, on balance, toward global catastrophe (please don't take my word for it; as of Monday of this week, the international scientific



consensus is that our current trajectory is looking worse all the time.) These systems must be addressed now, as quickly as possible, rather than waiting for one piece to be totally solved before moving on to the next.

Burning trash, chicken litter, and wood waste and manufacturing methane all pollute the environment, harm nearby communities' health, and contribute to the climate crisis: 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.

And here is what we are currently doing with that money: Air pollutants from waste incinerators increase the risk of pre-term births, cancers of the blood and lung, and emergency room visits. Incinerating trash creates 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 BRESKO Wheelabrator Baltimore incinerator causes over \$55 million in adverse health effects annually in the region.

For every kilowatt hour of energy produced, trash incineration produces more greenhouse gasses and toxins than coal. The illnesses caused by air pollution in the region disproportionately affect low-income and Black and brown communities. In Baltimore, asthma is the number one cause of missed school days. Where does all of that show up on the balance sheet?

The good news: better alternatives exist. In Baltimore, we are moving toward a zero waste strategy (reduce, reuse, recycle, compost), the 21st century alternative to incineration and landfilling. Zero waste systems create more jobs than our current systems, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality and quality of life.(3)

On Monday of this week, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called [the latest international scientific report on the climate crisis](#) “a damning indictment of failed climate leadership.” Please don’t think this problem is only up to the U.N. to solve, or President Biden, or members of Congress. As Maryland policymakers, you have the power to address the harm the climate crisis is already bringing to our state, and to use your 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. We could have a clean, green renewable energy future ahead of us if we make the right changes that are available to us.



For human health, for economic and racial justice in our communities, for the health of the economy, and to reduce the harms of the climate crisis, I urge you to grant a FAVORABLE report for HB11. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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1. Environmental Integrity Project. *Waste-To-Energy: Dirtying Maryland's Air by Seeking a Quick Fix on Renewable Energy?* October 2011.
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/>