



HoCoClimateAction.org
Howard County, Maryland

Testimony in SUPPORT of – SB616 - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Eligible Sources – Waste-to-Energy and Refuse-Derived Fuel

Hearing Date: March 15, 2022

Bill Sponsor: Senator Hough

Committee: Finance

Submitting: Howard County Climate Action

Position: Favorable With Amendments

HoCo Climate Action is a 350.org local chapter and a grassroots organization representing almost 1,400 advocates, and a member of [the Climate Justice Wing](#) of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition](#).

We support SB616, Waste-to-Energy and Refuse, with amendments, as we strongly support removing trash incineration from the Renewable Portfolio Standard. Trash incineration should not receive clean energy subsidies for numerous reasons: It is not sustainable or renewable; it emits carcinogens and neurotoxins; it harms the health of nearby communities; and it produces more greenhouse gasses per unit of energy than coal, the dirtiest of fossil fuels. Trash incineration is not the only dirty energy source in the RPS, however, so we strongly encourage you to amend SB616 to also remove other sources of climate-damaging energy.

According to the scathing and blunt assessment of the [Maryland Clean Energy Report 2022](#) published by [PEER.org](#): “In 2020, dirty energy sources made up nearly 35% of Maryland’s ‘clean energy’ under the state’s Tier 1 Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). These dirty sources include municipal solid waste burned to produce electricity; methane gas collected from landfills and burned in electric generators; black liquor, a sludgy byproduct of the pulping process that paper mills burn to power their operations; and woody biomass, woody debris or residue burned in power plants and paper mills.” Thankfully, the General Assembly removed black liquor from the RPS in 2021, but Maryland needs to quit wasting rate payers’ money and finally stop subsidizing dirty sources of energy, whether burning chicken manure or plastics.

In addition, most of the subsidies from Maryland ratepayers go to dirty out-of-state sources of energy, robbing Maryland of clean-energy jobs. Since 2008, Maryland ratepayers have sent \$108 million in subsidies to Virginia alone. These subsidies also go to facilities that repeatedly violate environmental laws. In essence, Marylanders help these companies to generate dirty energy and pay their fines.

Beyond the climate-polluting gasses, many dirty energy sources produce a host of other toxic gasses and pollutants. Incineration is the most notorious offender, but others include poultry litter(manure)-to-energy, woody biomass incineration, methane from anaerobic digestion, and landfill-gas-to-energy. Some argue that these industries are necessary for waste processing, but often lower-waste or zero-waste alternatives exist. One of the worst side effects is that dirty energy subsidies siphon off incentives for non-polluting and renewable energies.

We urge a FAVORABLE vote with amendments for SB616 so that RPS Tier 1 subsidies can go toward supporting wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal power, rather than climate-harming energy sources.

HoCo Climate Action

HoCoClimateAction@gmail.com -

Submitted by Liz Feighner, Steering and Advocacy Committee, Columbia MD

www.HoCoClimateAction.org