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Testimony in Support of  
Senate Bill 903 - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Qualifying Biomass and Thermal Biomass Systems  
Senate Finance Committee  
March 01, 2022

**The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 903 - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Qualifying Biomass and Thermal Biomass Systems.** The purpose of this bill is to authorize thermal biomass systems, for purposes of the State's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS), to use food waste, qualifying biomass, or animal manure as a source of fuel, regardless of the relative mix of fuel sources.

This bill is asking for wood energy to be clearly decoupled from animal manure when applying to Thermal Renewable Energy Credits (TREC)s. Wood energy is a small part of Maryland's current Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) but provides significant benefits to the environment, reduces dependency on fossil fuels, and helps the local economy by investing in Maryland energy production and jobs. Additionally, it has been recognized by entities such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as an immediate solution to decarbonize our fuel supply.

In 2015, the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Department of Agriculture announced a national goal to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030. According to the Maryland Department of the Environment, over nine hundred thousand tons of food waste is generated annually and only a small portion is recycled with the majority being disposed in landfills or incinerated. Including food waste as a renewable fuel source can provide a significant contribution towards on farm energy use, revenue generation, and climate change mitigation. An example of this is a partnership between West Nottingham Academy and Kilby Farm Creamery located in Cecil County. In partnership, the school diverts nearly 7 tons of food waste annually from their dining hall to the farm digester where it becomes compost and energy to run the farm.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 903.

*The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.*

**"A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland"**