

TO: Senator Delores G. Kelley  
Finance Committee

RE: SB 616: “Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Eligible Sources – Waste-to-Energy and Refuse-Derived Fuel

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Testimony of J. Stephen Cleghorn, PhD  
Baltimore volunteer coordinator, Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home

Dear Chair Kelley and Senators of the Finance Committee:

I am a member of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home (MCCH), a group of lay and religious Maryland Catholics advocating for care of the Earth, our common home. This means that we advocate also for care of the poor who are harmed most and first by environmental degradation and climate change. Today I am registering a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT opinion on SB 616.

Since 2019, ever since the Maryland General Assembly passed the Clean Energy Jobs Act, I have been involved in trying to correct a wrong in that Act – which was that it retained trash burning and other dirty energy sources as Tier 1 renewable energy sources. That was a compromise to get the good, clean energy parts of the Act passed. Since then, I have come out to the streets and marches in support of community led groups like the South Baltimore Land Trust to end public subsidies for dirty, dangerous energy. That’s me in the middle of a group of activists, holding up my sign, as we



conducted a die-in at the Wheelabrator Baltimore Refuse Energy Systems Co. (BRESKO) incinerator in Baltimore. We were dramatizing that people living under the plume of that smokestack suffer the highest rates of asthma in the city and that 36% of all industrial air pollution in Baltimore comes from BRESKO — the most of any stationary source in the city.

In addition to removing trash incineration, we in Baltimore recognize and stand in solidarity with the communities on the Eastern Shore fighting new factory farm biogas - another polluter that must be removed from the RPS. With so many alternatives available now for truly clean energy generation, it makes much more sense to use renewable energy subsidies for expanding that supply rather than building new dirty energy infrastructure, and so I hope you will consider amending SB616 to remove factory farm biogas

Now is the time to move beyond protests and marches to legislation, and only our legislators can do that. So, I ask you to please consider the points below from Clean Water Action and report out a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT recommendation for SB 616. Thank you so much for the important work you do and for considering my testimony in your decision.

Sincerely,

J. Stephen Cleghorn, PhD  
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From Clean Water Action:

- *Trash incineration should never have been included in Tier 1 of the RPS.* Trash incinerators pollute more than coal per unit of energy produced and emit significant quantities of greenhouse gasses and local harmful air pollution: much of their energy comes from burning plastic, a fossil fuel. In the original design of the RPS program, incinerators were included in the Tier 2 category that was to phase out in 2019, but in 2011 as community pressure was mounting against two new proposed incinerators in Baltimore and Frederick, the industry got itself added to Tier 1. Ultimately, the community opposition won, and neither facility was built, but \$36 million in RPS subsidies still goes to incineration each year.
- *Other types of burning waste or manufacturing methane must come out of the RPS for the same exact reasons as trash incineration.* They all emit greenhouse gasses, pollute and harm the health of their neighboring communities, are disproportionately located in communities already overburdened by pollution, and prop up industrial systems from which we must transition in order to combat climate change. If Maryland does not eliminate ratepayer subsidies of all trash incineration and methane producing industrial processes, PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility) estimates that by 2030 Maryland ratepayers will have wasted \$500,000,000 by subsidizing polluters, money that could have been spent encouraging truly clean, renewable energy supplies.
- *Every vote to retain any polluter in or add any polluter to the RPS is a bad vote.* We must hold legislators accountable for every vote they take on any bill or amendment that would add or retain any polluting energy source in the RPS.