



# PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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## Testimony on Maryland House Bill 166 Reclaim Renewable Energy Act

**TO:** Chair C.T. Wilson, Vice Chair Brian M. Crosby, and members of the committee

**FROM:** Mikal Rashid

**DATE:** March 7, 2024

**POSITION:** Favorable

Greetings,

My name is Mikal Rashid. I'm a former Truck Driver, and a resident of Cherry Hill, South Baltimore, Senate district 46, downwind of the BRESKO Waste to Energy Incinerator. I'd like to share with you why I believe you should support the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act.

When I moved to Cherry Hill, I was in perfect health. I walked considerably for work, and I exercised, played sports, and generally enjoyed life. This was in 2018. I had noticed a "thickness" in the air in the area, but I moved here out of poverty, so this was something I was forced to live with.

As time went on, I began to notice my breathing was becoming more difficult. I was also developing severe rheumatic illness. As of 2020, I became a truck driver, my dream job. I felt great out on the road, but when I was at home, and I eventually became a local driver, my health continued to deteriorate. It has become, as of 2024, so bad, that my doctors became seriously concerned, and I no longer work as a consequence. I was diagnosed in mid-late 2023 with several rheumatic illnesses and severe asthma, and some other asthma associated health complications. As I'm writing this now, I'm on several medications, and in excruciating pain. I cannot walk more than a few feet now. Every action I take is incredibly painful, and I suffer from a phenomenon known as "brain zaps" due to the medication I take, which prevents me from being able to cook or drive for myself most days. My life has become agony.

What's worse, is that I do not have an income. So, my daughter, who I should mention, was born not breathing, after we had been living here in 2018, now suffers along with me in that she has to rely solely on her mother, who was fortunate enough to have moved out before developing severe complications. I was on a mere trucker's salary at my peak income, so I did not have that luxury, as is the case with many of the predominantly black and brown residents here.

My doctors are largely in agreement that environmental pollution is the likely cause of my health issues. I would like to emphasize this point. Environmental pollution is the likely cause of my health issues. I do not believe that it is just, that the citizens of Maryland, including those who are impacted the most by the environmentally racist pollution generated by what is scientifically considered non-renewable, unclean energy production, should be forced to unjustly subsidize that very energy production, and subsequently the pollution, that, in my case, and in many other's, has effectively destroyed, and possibly ended our lives.

Sincerely,  
Mikal Rashid