



## **Councilman Mark Conway**

Baltimore City Council *Fourth District*

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100 N. Holliday Street, Suite 550 • Baltimore, Maryland 21202

(410) 396-4830 • [mark.conway@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:mark.conway@baltimorecity.gov)

**TO:** Chair C. T. Wilson; Vice Chair Brian M. Crosby; members of the Economic Matters Committee

**FROM:** Councilman Mark Conway (District 4)

**RE:** HB166 (Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources - Alterations (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2024))

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Honorable Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and members of the committee,

As members of the Baltimore City Council, we are dedicated to making our city cleaner, greener, and healthier, with more economic opportunity for all. We strongly urge you to pass HB166, to alter the definition of “Tier 1 renewable source” in Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard to exclude trash incineration. This would free up tens of millions of dollars to support real renewable energy by redirecting subsidies away from outdated energy sources, including Baltimore’s trash incinerator.

Trash incineration is not clean or renewable energy. Incinerators like the BRESKO trash incinerator in Baltimore emit dangerous pollutants such as mercury and dioxins, contributing to cancer, heart disease, lung disease, and more negative health outcomes in Baltimore City and across the region. Much of the energy that incinerators like BRESKO produce is created by burning products derived from fossil fuels, which are not renewable sources. Trash incineration is the most polluting method of producing electricity, emitting more carbon dioxide per megawatt-hour than even coal. New emissions limits required at the BRESKO incinerator by a court settlement in 2020 do not include any requirement to decrease CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and allow the incinerator to continue to emit mercury and lead, which are not safe for human exposure at any level. There is no justification for diverting much-needed subsidies away from real renewable energy to profit trash incineration.

There are three trash incinerators subsidized by Maryland’s RPS: BRESKO here in Baltimore City (operated by a private company which receives these subsidies, not city government), the incinerator in Montgomery County, and another in Lorton, Virginia. Our constituents do not want to be forced to subsidize the incinerator that is polluting the air we breathe; they also do not want to be forced to subsidize incinerators elsewhere in the State.

Instead, we should support new rooftop and brownfield solar development here in Baltimore City to power homes and create green jobs. Redirecting these subsidies will do far more good than throwing away our money on aging trash incinerators that — in the case of BRESKO in Baltimore City — operated profitably for a quarter century before Maryland put trash incineration in Tier 1 of its RPS. In 2022, Maryland wasted \$25 million on trash incinerators. By passing the Reclaim Renewable Energy

Act, you will be making that much more money available to support real renewable energy at no financial cost to the state — the fiscally responsible move.

Our city government, local businesses, and constituents are working hard to develop better methods of waste management, reduction, and disposal so that we can send less waste, and ultimately nothing at all, to the incinerator. Community associations and restaurants are composting, businesses are eliminating single-use plastics, school and university cafeterias are rescuing food that would be wasted, and our city government is developing its first food waste composting facility. By subsidizing the trash incinerator as “renewable energy,” the State of Maryland is holding us back. These extra profits give the incinerator an economic leg up over the better alternatives that our communities are trying to build. Maryland must stop subsidizing the worst method of disposing of our waste and allow the alternatives to thrive.

We on the Baltimore City Council are in strong support of the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act (HB166), and we urge you to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,



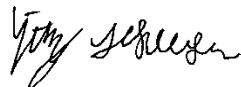
Mark S. Conway, Jr.  
Fourth District



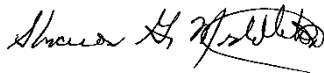
Zeke Cohen  
First District



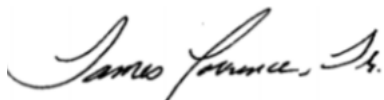
Ryan Dorsey  
Third District



Yitzy Schleifer  
Fifth District



Sharon Green Middleton  
Sixth District



James Torrence  
Seventh District



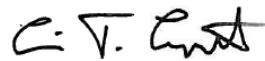
Kristerfer Burnett  
Eighth District



John Bullock  
Ninth District



Phylcia Porter  
Tenth District



Eric Costello  
Eleventh District



Antonio Glover  
Thirteenth District



Odette Ramos  
Fourteen District