



February 20, 2020

Bill: Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources (HB438)

Position: Favorable

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

Blue Water Baltimore's mission is to restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams, and Harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities. We respectfully urge your support of HB438 and the effort to remove trash incineration from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard.

Burning trash is not clean energy. In reality, incineration harms our air, water, and communities. Nitrogen is a significant source of pollution in the Chesapeake Bay, contributing to algal blooms and dead zones that harm aquatic life. Air pollution causes about one third of the nitrogen pollution in the Bay and is also a main source of mercury pollution that contaminates fish.¹ Facilities like the Wheelabrator incinerator in Baltimore City contribute to this air pollution. In fact, Maryland's two incinerators emit higher levels of mercury, lead, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and carbon dioxide than Maryland's coal plants to produce the same amount of energy.²

Classifying incineration as "renewable energy" runs counter to our regional goals and commitments to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland spends millions of dollars a year to reduce pollution in the Bay³ -- why undercut these efforts by incentivizing a source of pollution?

In addition to polluting our waterways, incineration increases the rate of respiratory illnesses and other health problems in our communities, exacerbates environmental injustice, and reinforces our throwaway culture. Blue Water Baltimore volunteers collected over six tons of trash from our streets and streams last year. Yet when we dispose of this litter, we know much of it is going to the Wheelabrator incinerator and simply transforming into another form of pollution. Instead of burning and burying our waste, we must reduce waste at the source, reuse materials, and invest in zero waste solutions.

Maryland's renewable energy subsidies should be used to support truly clean energy like wind and solar, not trash incineration that pollutes our waterways and communities. Please support HB438 to end subsidies for trash incineration in Maryland and help move our state to a zero waste future.

Sincerely,
Taylor Smith-Hams
Outreach & Advocacy Specialist

¹ "Air Pollution," *Chesapeake Bay Foundation*, <https://www.cbf.org/issues/air-pollution/>, accessed 18 February 2020.

² Leah Kelly, "Waste-To-Energy: Dirtying Maryland's Air by Seeking a Quick Fix on Renewable Energy?" *Environmental Integrity Project*, October 2011, http://environmentalintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2011-10_WTE_Incinerator.pdf.

³ Lawrence J. Hogan Jr., Governor and Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor, "Maryland Budget Highlights Fiscal Year 2020," 18 January 2019, <https://dbm.maryland.gov/budget/Documents/operbudget/2020/proposed/FY2020-BudgetHighlights-WebFinal.pdf>.