HB 363 - Clean and Renewable Energy Standard (CARES)
Economic Matters Committee
February 28, 2020
UNFAVORABLE

Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student funded, student directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For forty five years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society.

Maryland's reliance on polluting fuels puts our health and safety at risk. The growth of cleaner technologies in Maryland benefits both our environment and our economy. **We thank Governor Hogan for including a phase out of dirty energy sources like incineration and black liquor from our state's RPS, but otherwise think HB363 falls short.** We hope the Committee will move stand alone bills forward that clean up the RPS.

HB363 continues Maryland's reliance on dirty and dangerous energy sources, including nuclear power and gas. **Economically risky, at best, investing in and relying on nuclear and gas undermines our efforts to address climate change and provide safe, affordable energy for Marylanders.**

Nuclear power has relied on government subsidies for 60 years. Without billions of dollars in direct and indirect subsidies, and taxpayers on the hook to cover liability in case of an accident, the nuclear industry would not exist. In 2009 the Maryland PIRG Foundation released a report "The High Cost of Nuclear Power: Why Maryland Can't Afford a New Reactor," which still rings true. This bill doubles down on nuclear power, both by propping up our existing nuclear reactors at Calvert Cliffs and by providing subsidies for new nuclear power plants.

When we restructured Maryland's electricity markets twenty years ago, energy generators accepted the risks of competition and have earned substantial profits. As reactors across the northeast near retirement, including nearby Peach Bottom and Maryland's Calvert Cliffs, we must responsibly prepare for their inevitable shut down.

This bill includes references to building new nuclear power plants, an idea which makes no economic sense. Historically, new nuclear power plants take more than a decade to construct, cost billions of dollars, and the industry is plagued with cost-overruns and failure to finish construction on time. Since 2007, plans to build 30 new reactors have been announced across the U.S. All but two have been suspended, cancelled, or abandoned. While one may hope the modular reactors will have a different outcome, the time and money to test, build and licence them would be better invested in alternatives like energy efficiency, wind and solar power.

This bill also supports gas, calling it a "clean energy resource." Over its life cycle, the global warming impacts of gas are basically the same as other fossil fuels, like coal and oil. Methane leaks, in particular, from extraction, transmission, and distribution are a huge source of greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, it will soon be cheaper to build new wind farms and solar arrays than to operate gas fired power plants, making investment in gas infrastructure a bad choice for consumers. [1]

Nuclear and gas are neither clean nor renewable sources of energy, and should have no place in our state's plans to move towards 100% renewable energy. While an "all of the above" strategy might sound good - nuclear and gas just can't deliver. Dollar for dollar, energy efficiency, wind, and solar are all cheaper than invest in these energy sources, and much faster to get online. .

Whether it's old nukes, new nukes, or gas, every credit we give, or dollar we spend propping up the energy of our past is a dollar we can't spend on the transition to a clean, safe, and affordable energy economy.

Let's do better.

We recommend an unfavorable report.

[1] The Economics of Clean Energy Portfolios, Rocky Mountain Institute, Dyson, Engle, Farbes, 2018. https://rmi.org/insight/the-economics-of-clean-energy-portfolios/