



Committee: Economic Matters Committee
Testimony on: HB1379 - Renewable Natural Gas Pilot Program
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Submitting: Dave Arndt, Co-Chair
Position: Unfavorable
Hearing Date: March 5, 2024

Dear Mr. Chair and Committee Members:

We are submitting testimony today in opposition to HB1379. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of nearly 30 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote unfavorable on HB1379.

We want to express our strong opposition to HB1379, which directs the Maryland Department of the Environment to procure renewable natural gas for use in the state's transportation and building sectors. We are in a climate crisis, and we cannot afford to be spending any effort to maintain or drive the use of methane, a strong greenhouse gas, especially in state buildings and for state transportation. Now is the time to double down Maryland's commitment to truly renewable energy and support only facilities and transportation that are methane free.

Methane production locks Maryland into costly gas infrastructure and greenhouse gas emissions

- Anaerobic digestion of biomass, factory farm waste, animal waste and other materials is a process where the organic material is broken down by specialized methane-producing microorganisms that can only thrive in the absence of oxygen. Biomass, when composted properly, does not emit significant amounts of methane.
- We all know that landfilling biomass produces methane, however we must stop presenting the false narrative that either we have to burn or landfill biomass. Yes, we have existing landfill sites that are producing methane and we must manage them correctly by harvesting the methane, however this should be a limited practice that we strive to eliminate. Composting is the best answer. Methane from anaerobic digestion should only be used for onsite heat and power or industrial processes in remote locations that cannot use other sources of energy. It should not be used as energy for state buildings and transportation.
- No matter the source, burning methane produces CO₂. Furthermore, it is an even more potent greenhouse gas in and of itself when it leaks into the atmosphere - a huge and undercounted problem. Studies show that in 2015, leaks along the natural gas supply chain were approximately 60% higher than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency inventory estimate. [[Earthjustice paper](#), page 5, [research paper](#)] The industry standard leakage rate for methane is 3%, we don't need to any pilots to know that this is something we should avoid.

- The construction of biogas facilities are extremely costly, and they are generally not profitable without subsidies and incentives. ([FWW Fact Sheet](#)) Even piloting anaerobic digestion provides an unwanted financial incentive to add new greenhouse gas emitting technology to our grid under the guise of renewable energy - on the public's dime. It also is an excuse for maintaining and expanding costly gas infrastructure, when Maryland should be on an energy transition path to retiring gas infrastructure.
- Sending animal waste to a digester creates methane but does nothing to mitigate the significant air quality issues associated with factory farms. Additionally, the anaerobic digestion process leaves behind a nutrient-laden digestate that must still be disposed of. [Studies](#) have shown that the effluents include highly concentrated amounts of nitrogen (ammonia) and phosphorus that when spread on fields causes polluted runoff to streams and the Chesapeake Bay.

For all of these reasons, we strongly oppose HB1379 and urge a **UNFAVORABLE** report in Committee.

350MoCo

Adat Shalom Climate Action

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry

Chesapeake Earth Holders

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Climate Parents of Prince George's

Climate Reality Project

ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition

Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists

DoTheMostGood Montgomery County

Echotopia

Elders Climate Action

Fix Maryland Rail

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization

Greenbelt Climate Action Network

HoCoClimateAction

IndivisibleHoCoMD

Maryland Legislative Coalition

Mobilize Frederick

Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Mountain Maryland Movement

Nuclear Information & Resource Service

Progressive Maryland

Safe & Healthy Playing Fields

Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee

The Climate Mobilization MoCo Chapter

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

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