



NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

Date: March 7, 2024

Bill: HB 166 - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2024)

Position: Support

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **House Bill 166 - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources - Alterations (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2024)**, which would redefine “Tier 1 renewable source” of energy and exclude energy derived from waste and refuse as eligible for inclusion in the renewable energy portfolio standard.

The National Aquarium connects people with nature to inspire conservation action, through a holistic, solutions-focused approach, which includes translating ocean and climate science, building resilience through community empowerment, implementing nature-based solutions, and reducing our own carbon footprint. Our work is guided by three overarching goals to combat climate change, stop plastic pollution, and save wildlife and habitats. The National Aquarium is committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. Our ability to reach net-zero depends on the state increasing its renewable energy from truly clean and renewable sources. The perverse incentive created by including trash incineration as “renewable” in our RPS allows for it to continue to occupy space on our grid that can and should be filled with clean renewable energy like wind and solar.

Trash incineration not only exacerbates climate change; it is also linked to the plastic pollution crisis. Municipalities in Maryland, like others around the nation and the world, are unable to keep up with the increasing production of plastic and the resulting waste that primarily ends up in the environment, or in landfills or incinerators. Trash incineration adds greenhouse gas emissions and harmful air pollution to the atmosphere while also disincentivizing better waste management practices including source reduction, reuse systems, recycling and composting. To make matters worse, trash incinerators are often sited in underserved and overburdened communities. It is long overdue for the state to stop subsidizing smokestacks in communities where environmental justice must be a priority.

It is incumbent that governments at every level focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions rapidly while prioritizing a just transition away from fossil fuels. Maryland is a climate leader with ambitious goals and a commitment to environmental justice. As recommended by both the Maryland Commission on Climate Change and the state’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, the legislature must clarify that burning trash is not clean energy and should not be subsidized by ratepayers.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 166.

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