



**Testimony on SB146/HB166
Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2024
Position: **Favorable****

To Chair Senator Brian Feldman and the members of the committee;

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers-East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the country, representing over 10,000 members in Maryland/DC. Our union supports the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act 2024, and we urge a favorable report. Passing this bill is critical to achieving our state's goals of reaching 100% clean energy and will improve community health.

The Baltimore BRESKO trash incinerator turns garbage from Baltimore City and local counties into air pollution, toxic ash, and emissions that have a negative impact on local residents' health and accelerate climate change. The communities abutting the incinerator, including Westport, Cherry Hill, and Brooklyn, are primarily Black and Brown. Residents go to the hospital more frequently than individuals who live elsewhere in Maryland and are five times more likely to have asthma. This is environmental injustice and racism in action. Our state sends tens of millions of dollars each year in subsidies to trash incinerators that emit greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution in overburdened communities. In 2022, BRESKO received \$5.7 million in RPS subsidies and emitted 653,000 tons of carbon dioxide.

The solution to this problem is ending subsidies for trash incineration and implementing cleaner, cheaper alternatives that create green jobs and limit pollution. Studies conducted in Baltimore show that investing in waste management strategies such as composting and recycling can save money and create good quality employment opportunities. For every non-unionized job created at a trash incinerator, nine union jobs could be created at a recycling facility, and four at a composting facility. Replacing the Baltimore incinerator with a composting facility could replace existing jobs with [higher paying green jobs](#). According to a [report](#) from Global Anti-Incineration Alliance, implementing zero waste policies can create 200 times more jobs than landfills and incinerators.

The majority of 1199SEIU members are People of Color. As we can see, this is not just an environmental issue, but a social one as well. For too long, these communities have been taken advantage of, and their health has been the cost. Maryland also faces a dangerous staffing crisis across the healthcare industry. Passing this bill can help reduce the burden on healthcare workers, particularly in our hospitals, by alleviating the number of patients that flood healthcare facilities due to preventable illnesses caused by toxins in our environment from dirty energy sources. Toxins from trash incineration, biogas from factory farms, and woody biomass are linked to healthcare ailments such as asthma, cancer, reproductive disorders, and other negative health impacts.

For the sake of our people and our planet, we encourage a favorable report on the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act 2024. Thank you.

In Unity,

Ricarra Jones
Political Director
1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers-East