

KAREN LEWIS YOUNG
Legislative District 3
Frederick County

Committee on Education, Energy,
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB 146: Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Eligible Sources
– Alterations (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2024)
January 25, 2024**

Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

It is my pleasure to offer testimony in support of **Senate Bill 146** - Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2024. If enacted, this bill will **remove trash incineration from qualification in the state’s renewable portfolio standard.**

Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) was created with the goals of decreasing long-term emissions and working toward a healthier environment. But because trash incineration is included in Maryland’s definition of “renewable energy sources” eligible for Tier 1 Renewable Energy Credits (RECs), the RPS is subsidizing an energy source that actually *increases* emissions and *harms* environmental health. Allowing the RPS to subsidize trash incineration pollutes Maryland, harms ratepayers, and impedes job growth.

Trash incinerators are one of the worst polluters, up there with airports and paper mills. Trash incinerators release 28 times as much dioxin, 2.5 times as much carbon dioxide (CO₂), twice as much carbon monoxide, three times as much nitrogen oxides (NO_x), 6-14 times as much mercury, nearly six times as much lead and 70% more sulfur dioxides than a coal plant would to produce the same amount of energy. These persistent pollutants do not break down, allowing them to move without confinement and build up in people and wildlife. For example, some of these toxins, such as dioxins and mercury compounds are found even in arctic marine mammals, as far from an industrial source as possible. One study found that past municipal waste incineration in the U.S. has been responsible for 70-80% of dioxins found in the far North. Detrimentially, dioxin is also considered by the World Health Organization to be a human carcinogen.

Trash incinerators are also costly for ratepayers. In 2022, trash incinerators took up 12.5 percent of all RECs and 54 percent of all RECs retired¹ for RPS compliance. The cost of RECs

¹ “Retired” here means to claim the REC and commit it to be used for RPS compliance.

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varies depending on the energy source, and at \$22.96 per REC, trash incineration is second only to solar in cost. Indeed, the World Bank has identified incineration as the most expensive way to deal with municipal waste, with costs high above alternatives like composting. The money to subsidize incineration comes from Maryland taxpayers. Allowing incineration to receive subsidies as a renewable energy forces Maryland taxpayers to pay for a costly, caustic disposal method.

Moreover, the funds paid by Maryland taxes that go to RECs for incinerators often leave the state. In 2022, 47.5 percent of the RECs granted to trash incineration sources went to just one incinerator in Virginia rather than going to supporting clean energy initiatives within Maryland. That's \$6,444,202.71 USD that could have gone toward helping develop new, clean energy within Maryland – just from 2022 alone. Using the funds currently spent on subsidizing trash incinerators to develop in-state, clean energy sources would not only be better for the environment, but it could make Maryland less dependent on other states for sources like wind and solar and create new jobs building and maintaining these sources. We are funding out-of-state trash incinerators at the expense of wind and solar jobs in Maryland.

Trash incineration should never have been a part of the RPS. In the original design of the RPS program, incinerators were included in the Tier 2 category that was to phase out in 2019. In 2011, Maryland became the first state to bump trash incineration from Tier 2 to Tier 1, putting it in competition with wind and solar power. At the time, there were two new proposed incinerators in Baltimore and Frederick. Due to massive community backlash, neither facility was built, but millions in RPS subsidies still goes to incineration each year.

The General Assembly already acknowledged that the Renewable Portfolio Standard will be more effective with fewer eligible polluters. The legislature already eliminated black liquor from the RPS in 2021. Passing Senate Bill 146 is a continuation of that good work and will make the RPS even more effective at meeting its goals.

In conclusion, we must remove trash incineration from the state's renewable portfolio standard. Trash incinerators pollute more than coal. Their emissions do not break down, cannot be contained, and cause widespread damage to the health of our constituents and our state's beautiful wildlife. Granting subsidies like renewable energy credits to trash incinerators costs Maryland ratepayers - costs that currently leave the state, when they could be going toward

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creating jobs and lead to new sources of clean energy. It is time to take action and reclaim our renewable energy portfolio standard program.

I urge a favorable report of **Senate Bill 146**. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Lewis Young".

Senator Karen Lewis Young