



HoCoClimateAction.org
Howard County, Maryland

SB0146: Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources - Alterations (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2024)

Hearing Date: January 25, 2024

Bill Sponsor: Senators Lewis Young, Ellis, M. Washington, and West

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Submitting: Liz Feighner for HoCo Climate Action

Position: Favorable

[HoCo Climate Action](#) is a [350.org](#) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing approximately 1,400 subscribers. It is also a member of the [Climate Justice Wing](#) of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition](#).

Howard County Climate Action supports SB0146, the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2024 and we urge you to pass SB0146 to stop wasting Maryland residents' money on trash incinerators and make more funding available for real renewable energy - at no additional cost to the state budget. We were actively involved helping the Baltimore student-led [Free Your Voice](#) stop a trash incinerator in Curtis Bay in 2013 which prevented more wasted RPS funds on another trash incinerator. This issue is very important to our organization because trash incineration is neither clean nor renewable; its inclusion in the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) is counter to the program's goals.

With utility rates that keep rising in Maryland, ratepayers would be better served if their funds currently wasted on subsidizing trash incineration were instead supporting real renewable energy, such as wind, solar and geothermal.

The purpose of the RPS is to support clean, renewable energy, which Maryland needs now more than ever. When establishing the RPS in 2004, the legislature wrote that the benefits of renewable energy include "long-term decreased emissions" and "a healthier environment." Trash incineration was only added to Tier 1 of the RPS in 2011, making it part of the same subsidized category as wind and solar. Rate payers should not be providing a *windfall* for trash incinerators by subsidizing them and should be providing funds for true clean energy like *wind, solar and geothermal*.

Maryland is wasting an increasing amount of RPS money on trash incineration, much of it out of state. Over three years, due to the market-based nature of the subsidy (the amount of electricity produced by incinerators has not increased), the total subsidies to trash incinerators through Maryland's RPS ballooned from \$11.5 million in 2020 to \$24.7 million in 2022. In 2022,

the BRESKO incinerator in Baltimore received \$4.2 million; the Montgomery County incinerator in Dickerson received \$8.7 million, and the Covanta incinerator in Lorton, VA, received a windfall of \$11.7 million - twice as much as Montgomery County's incinerator and three times as much as the incinerator in Baltimore. If these trends continue and trash incineration remains in the RPS, Maryland ratepayers will be increasingly harmed: we will be wasting ever-increasing amounts of money, much of it out of state, that isn't putting renewable power on the grid.

Trash incineration is not clean, renewable energy and is contradictory to the goals of the RPS and Maryland's Climate Plans. Trash incineration is among the dirtiest methods of producing electricity. [A new 2023 study in PLOS Climate](#) found that "incinerators emit more greenhouse gas emissions per unit of electricity produced than *any* other power source" - even coal plants. [EPA's Emissions Inventory](#) indicates that in 2020, the three trash incinerators profiting from Maryland's RPS emitted 2.5 million tons of CO2 into the atmosphere. Maryland Department of the Environment's [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#) recommends aligning the RPS with the forthcoming Clean Power Standard which clearly states the standard will not include trash incineration. **Maryland Commission on Climate Change's 2023 Annual Report** recommends removing municipal solid waste incineration as an eligible generating source from the RPS.

We strongly believe this bill should be limited to removal of RPS subsidies for trash incineration. Maryland is developing a Clean Energy Standard this year, so we oppose adding any new energy sources to RPS subsidies. Any suggestions to add to the RPS that may come from energy developers should be rejected.

We urge a **favorable** report for SB0146.

Howard County Climate Action
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