



Testimony Supporting SB146
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
January 24, 2024

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Interfaith Power & Light works with congregations of many faith traditions to address climate change because we believe in a moral responsibility to care for creation and care for our neighbors through a just and equitable lens. In Maryland, our organization has relationships with nearly 11,000 people of faith and over 900 congregations across the state. We are writing this testimony to urge a favorable report on SB146, the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act.

Our congregations are taking action on the climate crisis because we know our climate pollution is hurting our neighbors, here and throughout the world. As people of faith, we are called to care for those most vulnerable, and we know climate change places particular communities at higher risk, especially communities of color, the elderly, people with disabilities, and our young people. This is why congregations across Maryland are taking action.

[EJ Framing] Maryland ratepayers should not be forced to subsidize facilities burning waste in their communities. The inclusion of trash incinerators in the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) is contrary to its original legislative intent. Trash incineration is not a clean or renewable energy source and these facilities are opposed by affected BIPOC and low-income communities whose health and wellbeing is put at risk by waste incineration. RPS funds should be supporting *actual* renewable energy sources, like wind and solar, that are creating new and family-supporting jobs for Marylanders. Our response to climate change needs to be just for all of our neighbors.

The purpose of the RPS program is to support clean, renewable energy. When establishing the RPS in 2004, the legislature wrote that the benefits of renewable energy include “long-term decreased emissions” and “a healthier environment.” Since then, the urgency of supporting renewable energy development in Maryland has only become greater. Maryland must act with urgency to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and carefully assess how we are spending the state’s resources to fight climate change, including the effectiveness of the Renewable Portfolio Standard program.

Maryland is wasting an increasing amount of RPS money on trash incineration, much of it going out of state. Over three years, the total subsidies to trash incinerators through Maryland’s RPS increased 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.

In Maryland's [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#), MDE's Climate Change Program staff recommends removing trash incineration from the RPS. In the plan released last month, the Maryland Department of the Environment recommends aligning the Renewable Portfolio Standard with the forthcoming Clean Power Standard. Although details of the Clean Power Standard are under development, one important detail is clear: the plan specifies that the Clean Power Standard will **not** include trash incineration (pages 21, 23).

Our communities are speaking out against combustion energy sources for the sake of "all that has breath." We are well aware of the consequences of burning waste is bringing to our communities, so it is time we stop using our state's clean energy program to pad incinerator profits.

We urge a favorable report on SB 146.

Sincerely,
Robin Lewis

Robin Lewis
Director for Climate Equity
she/her