



Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee
Testimony on: SB808 - Anaerobic Digestion Technology - Coordination and Guidance
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Submitting: Dave Arndt, Co-Chair
Position: Unfavorable
Hearing Date: March 27, 2024

Dear Mr. Chair and Committee Members:

We are submitting testimony today in opposition to SB808. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of nearly 30 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote unfavorable on SB808.

We want to express our strong opposition to SB808, requiring the Department of Agriculture, in coordination with certain State agencies, to establish certain guidance for farmers regarding the development and implementation of anaerobic digestion technology. We are in a climate crisis, and we cannot afford to be spending any effort to maintain or drive the use of methane, a strong greenhouse gas. Now is the time to double down Maryland's commitment to truly renewable energy and support only facilities and transportation that are methane free. This bill also fails to outline a process for community participation, which seems inattentive and exclusionary to the stakeholders that live where these digesters are to be located.

Methane production locks Maryland into costly gas infrastructure and greenhouse gas emissions

- Anaerobic digestion of biomass, factory farm waste, animal waste and other materials is a process where the organic material is broken down by specialized methane-producing microorganisms that can only thrive in the absence of oxygen. Biomass, when composted properly, does not emit significant amounts of methane.
- We all know that landfilling biomass produces methane, however we must stop presenting the false narrative that either we have to burn or landfill biomass. Yes, we have existing landfill sites that are producing methane and we must manage them correctly by harvesting the methane, however this should be a limited practice that we strive to eliminate. Composting is the best answer. Methane from anaerobic digestion should only be used for onsite heat and power or industrial processes in remote locations that cannot use other sources of energy. It should not be used as energy for state buildings and transportation.

- No matter the source, burning methane produces CO2. Furthermore, it is an even more potent greenhouse gas in and of itself when it leaks into the atmosphere - a huge and undercounted problem. Studies show that in 2015, leaks along the natural gas supply chain were approximately 60% higher than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency inventory estimate. [[Earthjustice paper](#), page 5, [research paper](#)] The industry standard leakage rate for methane is 3%, we don't need to any pilots to know that this is something we should avoid.
- The construction of biogas facilities are extremely costly, they are generally not profitable without subsidies and incentives. ([FWW Fact Sheet](#)) Even piloting anaerobic digestion provides an unwanted financial incentive to add new greenhouse gas emitting technology to our grid under the guise of renewable energy - on the public's dime. It also is an excuse for maintaining and expanding costly gas infrastructure, when Maryland should be on an energy transition path to retiring gas infrastructure.
- Sending animal waste to a digester creates methane but does nothing to mitigate the significant air quality issues associated with factory farms. Additionally, the anaerobic digestion process leaves behind a nutrient-laden digestate that must still be disposed of. [Studies](#) have shown that the effluents include highly concentrated amounts of nitrogen(ammonia) and phosphorus that when spread on fields causes polluted runoff to streams and the Chesapeake Bay.

For all of these reasons, we strongly oppose SB808 and urge a **UNFAVORABLE** report in Committee.

350MoCo
 Adat Shalom Climate Action
 Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry
 Chesapeake Earth Holders
 Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
 Climate Parents of Prince George's
 Climate Reality Project
 ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition
 Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists
 DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
 Echotopia
 Elders Climate Action
 Fix Maryland Rail
 Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
 Greenbelt Climate Action Network
 HoCoClimateAction
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