



HB0220 - SUPPORT

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Rachel Carson Council's Support for HB0220: Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources - Alterations (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025)

Economic Matters Committee

February 20th, 2025

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

On behalf of The Rachel Carson Council (RCC), a national environmental justice nonprofit organization headquartered in Maryland with a robust Maryland campus network, we urge a favorable report on HB0220.

Waste-burning energy does not belong in the Tier 1 renewable category alongside wind and solar within RPS; removing it is a logical step. The RCC has analyzed false climate solutions in the past, including industrial-scale biomass energy plants in the southeastern U.S., which struggle to stay afloat due to outdated equipment, bankruptcy, pollution and permit violations, convoluted carbon accounting, and community opposition—yet have survived by being bolstered by taxpayer subsidies. We've seen their difficulties in meaningfully fulfilling Europe's RE Directive and now observe a similar misalignment in trash incineration within Maryland's RPS.

In Maryland, classifying waste-to-energy and refuse-derived fuel as a Tier 1 renewable source is counterintuitive. Trash incinerators release hundreds of thousands of tons of respiratory-harming PM2.5 and planet-warming carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, yet they are treated as equal to solar and wind plants in RPS. Trash incinerators have also been quintessentially unpopular among Marylanders for years. Maryland residents don't want to subsidize pollution by the millions of dollars (over \$300 million by 2030), nor to see the Governor's climate plans halfheartedly fulfilled through trash burning. We want clean air, pride in our cities like Baltimore, and responsibility with our tax dollars.

Both the BRESKO plant and the Dickerson plant have raised community concerns due to their emissions. Not only do Maryland's participating incinerators emit more CO₂ than any other energy source in RPS, but they emit nitrous oxide, mercury, lead, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter. Baltimore's incinerator alone burdens Marylanders with \$55 million per year in health costs.

Profits and revenue statements from incinerator companies themselves reveal zero evidence that this bill would close their plants, nor would it pose actual waste management issues. According to its fiscal note, the bill "likely has a minimal impact on compliance costs and, by extension, a minimal impact on customer electricity rates. Therefore, the impact on expenditures on electricity for State and local governments and small businesses is also anticipated to be minimal."

CS Lewis famously said, "We all want progress, but if you're on the wrong road [...] the man who *turns back* soonest is the most progressive." **Please pass the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act as a step back in the right direction for Maryland.**

The Rachel Carson Council urges a favorable report on HB0220.