



Bill Title: HB0220 Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: Economic Matters Committee

From: Christianne Marguerite, Baltimore City Resident and Director of Communications at Progressive Maryland

Date: February 18, 2025

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

My name is Christianne Marguerite, and I'm writing to express my strong **support for HB0220 the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act (RREA) of 2025**. I have been a proud resident of Baltimore City for over 9 years. I live in Patterson Park, just across the harbor from the Wheelabrator Baltimore trash incinerator. I am also an avid runner and marathoner who loves exploring the charm of our beautiful city waterfront. However, while running should improve my health, it often comes at a cost—breathing outside air in Baltimore exposes me to air pollution and as a result, I have developed asthma that I am now forced to manage daily with an inhaler. I never had respiratory issues growing up until I fell in love with running around Baltimore. This is not just my new reality; it's the ongoing reality for countless other Baltimore residents whose bodies bear the burden of policies that prioritize toxic incineration over true renewable energy.

I am writing today to urge you to pass the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act, HB0220. This critical legislation would end the financial support Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) program provides to trash incineration and redirect those funds to genuine clean energy sources like solar and wind. For decades, the Wheelabrator incinerator operated by WIN Waste has released chemicals like mercury, lead, and particulate matter into the air, all of which disproportionately impact predominantly Black and low-income neighborhoods. Yet, somehow, this fossil fuel-intensive process is still classified as "renewable" under the RPS. Eliminating incineration from the RPS is long overdue, and I believe it is not only a matter of environmental policy but also one of public health, social justice, and economic fairness.

Ratepayers like myself should not endure subsidizing such harm. From 2012 to 2022 alone, Maryland electricity bills contributed over \$100 million to incineration facilities. That includes \$4.2 million allocated to purchase Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) from the very Wheelabrator incinerator that impacts the air I breathe. When I see these numbers, I can't help but wonder—why should our hard-earned dollars fund something that hurts our health, rather

than clean energy projects that would help us thrive? Why is profit being put above people? Why am I paying money to not be able to breathe?

The financial burden of supporting this outdated, polluting technology has only grown. Marylanders subsidized incineration to the tune of \$24.3 million in 2023, and if this practice isn't stopped, it could cost taxpayers an additional \$200 million by 2030. Over \$11 million in RECs went to the Covanta Fairfax incinerator in 2022, money that could instead promote wind turbines or solar panels. For comparison, incinerators emit more greenhouse gases per unit of electricity than almost any other energy source, including coal plants. This makes them neither clean nor cost-efficient.

Passing HB0220 is an opportunity to right these wrongs. Eliminating trash incineration from the RPS will reduce harmful subsidies and allow funds to flow to legitimate renewable energy sources that reduce greenhouse gases without harming public health. Not only would this shift clarify Maryland's commitment to clean energy, but it would also ensure we put our money to better use—whether by supporting solar projects or low-income renewable energy initiatives. Importantly, the fiscal note for this bill makes it clear that it will not increase rates for Marylanders.

For someone like me who suffers from the lasting health impacts of air pollution, this issue is deeply personal. But it's not just about me—it's about all Baltimore residents and Marylanders forced to endure polluted air while also being asked to subsidize the very facilities that harm them. It's time to focus on an energy future that sustains our communities instead of poisoning them.

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and esteemed members of the Committee, I urge you to vote favorably on the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act. I hope that this legislation will pave the way for cleaner air, healthier communities, and a more equitable and sustainable energy future.

Sincerely,
Christianne Marguerite
Resident of Baltimore City