



February 20, 2025

SUPPORT - SB 220 - Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025

Economic Matters Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to support HB 220, The Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025. United by a shared commitment to the health and well-being of all Marylanders, Healthy Climate Maryland is a coalition of dedicated public health and medical professionals that seeks to address climate change and environmental challenges by focusing on their impacts on public health. We are working to educate, advocate, and build strong partnerships towards a healthier, more sustainable future for Maryland.

This bill removes municipal solid waste incineration from the state's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS), and as a result would make more of Maryland's investments and Renewable Energy Credits available for truly renewable sources of energy like wind and solar.

Investments in renewable energy are investments in public health, namely because of the massive reduction in air pollution. Our reliance on fossil fuels for energy has created excessive air pollution across the country, a burden which is disproportionately borne by low-income communities and communities of color. Burning municipal solid waste for energy similarly produces byproducts that include particulate matter and dioxins. Particulate matter can make its way deep into the lungs and impact peoples' ability to breathe, impact children's lung development, and also impact people's mental health and learning ability because these microscopic particles can cross the blood-brain barrier.

The chart included below from a 2017 report estimates a cost of nearly \$22 million in Maryland from the direct health impacts from the Wheelabrator trash incinerator in Baltimore for just one year and one pollutant, PM 2.5. Investing our renewable energy money in trash incinerators that emit similar pollution as coal plants and other fossil fuel energy sources is a misuse of limited state dollars. Eliminating trash incineration from the RPS so that more money can be invested in real, emissions-free renewable energy will get more renewable energy on the grid, which will benefit every Marylander.

Table 2. Annual Maryland Human Health Effects and Monetary Valuations Associated With the PM_{2.5} Air Pollution Impacts from the Wheelabrator Plant

| Health Endpoint | Number Per Year | Total Dollar Valuation (2010\$) |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Respiratory Hospital Admissions (Kloog et al., 2012; Zanobetti et al., 2009) | 0.3 ^a | \$10,763 |
| Cardiovascular Hospital Admissions (Bell et al., 2008; Peng et al., 2008; Peng et al., 2009; Zanobetti et al., 2009) | 0.4 ^a | \$16,803 |
| Acute Bronchitis (Dockery et al., 1996) | 3.0 | \$1,462 |
| Acute Myocardial Infarction, Nonfatal (Pope et al., 2006; Sullivan et al., 2005; Zanobetti et al., 2009; Zanobetti & Schwartz, 2006) | 0.2 ^b | \$29,201 |
| Emergency Room Visits (Glad et al., 2012; Mar et al., 2010; Slaughter et al., 2005) | 2.4 ^b | \$1,003 |
| Asthma Exacerbation Symptoms (Mar et al., 2004; Ostro et al., 2001) | 59.5 ^b | \$3,435 |
| Upper Respiratory Symptoms (Pope et al., 1991) | 55.3 | \$1,841 |
| Lower Respiratory Symptoms (Schwartz and Neas, 2000) | 38.8 | \$815 |
| Minor Restricted Activity Days (Ostro & Rothschild, 1989) | 1770.8 | \$120,838 |
| Work Days Lost (Ostro et al., 1987) | 297.6 | \$55,091 |
| Chronic Bronchitis (Abbey et al., 1995) | 1.5 | \$419,644 ^c |
| Mortality, All Causes (Krewski et al., 2009) | 2.2 | \$21,160,530 |
| Total Valuation | | \$21,821,425 |

a Pooled effects with averaging approach, as per EPA BenMAP default setting.

b Pooled effects with random/fixed effects approach, as per EPA BenMAP default setting.

c Pooled effects with summation approach, as per EPA BenMAP default setting.

Source: WRITTEN REPORT OF GEORGE D. THURSTON REGARDING THE PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS OF AIR EMISSIONS FROM THE WHEELABRATOR FACILITY, November 20, 2017

<https://www.cbf.org/document-library/cbf-reports/thurston-wheelabrator-health-impacts-2017.pdf>

[Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#) (CPRP), published in December 2023, includes a recommendation to remove municipal solid waste from the state's RPS, and recognizes that legislation is needed to make this change. HB 220 codifies the CPRP's recommendation. In total, the recommendations included in the CPRP are expected to deliver additional health benefits of \$142 million to \$321 million in 2031 compared to current policies. The Maryland Commission on Climate Change also included a recommendation to remove municipal solid waste from the RPS as part of their [2023 annual report](#).

Thank you for the opportunity to support HB 220, The Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025 and we urge a favorable report.