



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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Bill Title: HB220 Reclaim Renewable Energy Act

Position: Favorable

To: Chair C.T. Wilson, Vice chair Crosby, Economic Matters Committee

From: Jeffrey Barnes, Member of Progressive Maryland

Date: 2/18/25

Dear Chair C.T. Wilson , Vice chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee.

As a resident of the 46th district, a Maryland ratepayer, a member of Progressive Maryland, and a resident concerned about the quality of air we breathe, I am writing to express my strong support for HB220, the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025. This bill is crucial for ensuring Maryland's energy policy truly prioritizes clean, renewable energy and responsible spending of taxpayer dollars. I live about 4 miles from the incinerator here in Baltimore and I feel the effects of the pollutants daily. Particulate matter particles accumulate on my tables, my computer, and the screens on my windows to a thickness that's scary nearly weekly. That's no way to live.

Maryland's government should be investing in genuine clean energy sources, not subsidizing polluting trash incineration under the guise of "renewable energy." This misclassification is a costly mistake that diverts crucial funds away from real solutions. From 2012 to 2022, Maryland ratepayers contributed over \$100 million to incineration through electricity bills. This is unacceptable.

In 2023 \$9 million of this total alone were used to finance the Wheelabrator Baltimore Refuse Energy Systems Company ("BRESKO") Incinerator.(3)

According to PEER in March 2024(3), "...Including trash incineration in the RPS is very costly for Marylanders. Between 2012 and 2022, Maryland energy providers spent about \$100,000,000 subsidizing trash incinerators through Maryland's RPS. Unless the legislature acts now, these costs will get much worse. Our analysis projects that between 2023 and 2030, Maryland energy providers will waste an additional \$200,000,000 subsidizing trash incineration if trash incineration remains in Maryland's RPS. These costs are passed on to consumers, likely at marked-up rates..."

Opponents may argue that removing trash incineration from the RPS will hinder progress towards our renewable energy targets. However, true progress cannot be built on false solutions. HB220 is not about slowing down; it's about correcting a fundamental flaw in our energy policy and ensuring that our investments are truly contributing to a clean energy future. Multiple Maryland state government agencies also support eliminating RPS payments to incinerators.

We must stop wasting taxpayer dollars on this harmful practice. Continuing to include trash incineration in the RPS inflates our progress towards clean energy goals and creates a false picture of our emissions reductions. For years, we have touted Maryland as a leader in renewable energy, but

our definition of “renewable” has been flawed as apparent from the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS)’s inclusion of waste incineration as a renewable source of energy. As a ratepayer, my utility bill should not be used to subsidize waste incineration, let alone under the guise of “clean, renewable energy.” Trash burning is not renewable nor clean under any definition as it emits carbon dioxide, mercury, and lead, which are not safe at any level. For us to continue expending our money towards an entity that is burning trash while claiming to be renewable is a sham and an embarrassment. Dollars are tight and I feel that we should be more responsible and environmentally conscious of how ratepayers’ money is spent. I would prefer that this money be used on authentic, clean, renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, or hydro-power. It also perpetuates environmental injustice, as these facilities disproportionately burden marginalized communities with harmful air and water pollution, including CO₂, mercury, and lead. These pollutants pose significant health risks and contribute to climate change. I experience the effects of this pollution firsthand, living near the Baltimore incinerator and regularly dealing with the accumulation of particulate matter. This is not a sustainable or healthy way to live.

That’s my take as a voter, homeowner, ratepayer, and an air breathing human. I hope you stand on the right side of history. I strongly urge you to pass SB0010 and show Marylanders that we are all serious about economic investment in clean energy, environmental justice, and a healthy future for our state. Let’s send a clear message that we will not be fooled by the green washing of dirty energy sources.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Barnes

(1) “Mercury exposure and children's health” (Bose-O'Reilly S, McCarty KM, Steckling N, Lettmeier B., 2010)

(2) “Lead in Food and Foodwares” (FDA, 2025)

(3) Public Employees for environmental Responsibility (PEER)

<https://peer.org/report-maryland-energy-subsidies-in-flames/#:~:text=Including%20trash%20incineration%20in%20the,likely%20at%20marked%20Dup%20rates.>