



NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

Date: February 20, 2025

Bill: HB 220 - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025)

Position: Support

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for HB 220 – Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources - Alterations (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025), which would redefine “Tier 1 renewable source” of energy and exclude energy derived from waste and refuse as eligible for inclusion in the renewable energy portfolio standard.

The National Aquarium connects people with nature to inspire conservation action, through a holistic, solutions-focused approach, which includes translating ocean and climate science, building resilience through community empowerment, implementing nature-based solutions, and reducing our own carbon footprint. Our work is guided by three overarching goals to combat climate change, stop plastic pollution, and save wildlife and habitats. The National Aquarium is committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. Reaching this target requires the state to increase its renewable energy production from sources that are truly clean and renewable, such as wind and solar. Labeling trash incineration as “renewable” detracts from Maryland’s ability to transition to truly renewable sources of energy and is counterproductive to attaining the state’s ambitious climate goals.

Trash incineration not only exacerbates climate change; it is also linked to the plastic pollution crisis. Municipalities in Maryland, like others around the nation and the world, are unable to keep up with the increasing production of plastic and both the monetary costs and environmental impacts when plastic ends up in landfills or incinerators. Trash incineration adds greenhouse gas emissions and harmful air pollution to the atmosphere while also disincentivizing better waste management practices including source reduction, reuse systems, recycling, and composting. To make matters worse, trash incinerators are often located in underserved and overburdened communities. It is long overdue for the state to stop subsidizing smokestacks in communities where environmental justice must be a priority.

It is incumbent that governments at every level focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions rapidly while prioritizing a just transition away from fossil fuels. Now more than ever, the state of Maryland can and should build on its climate and environmental justice leadership. The legislature must clarify that burning trash is not clean energy and should not be subsidized by ratepayers.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 220.

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