



SB0434 - UNFAVORABLE

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Unfavorable- SB0434 - Empowering New Energy Resources and Green Initiatives toward a Zero-Emissions (ENERGIZE) Maryland Act

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 20, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Sonia Demiray. I am the Executive Director of the Climate Communications Coalition, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition, and of the Maryland Climate Justice Wing. The Climate Communications Coalition strongly opposes SB0434.

The Energize Maryland Act, proposes to expand current Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), to 75% of energy generated by 2030 with 50% coming from Tier 1 renewable sources which include highly polluting trash incineration, woody biomass combustion, and biogas combustion. But SB0434 changes the name of these dirty sources to “clean.” This is greenwashing. Simply changing the name of the renewable portfolio standard to “clean energy portfolio standard” and pretending that we’re doing what is required to reduce our emissions is dishonest and misleading.

As of January 25, 2025, the average level of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere was [423.3 parts per million \(ppm\)](#), up from 280 ppm from pre-industrial revolution. Why should we care? Because these greenhouse gases cause deadly and costly climate disasters. The U.S. had [over 27 weather/climate disasters](#) that each exceeded \$1 billion in costs last year. Just because we have not had such a disaster in Maryland doesn’t mean it can’t happen. The number of extreme events will continue to grow until we eliminate our greenhouse gas emissions and then continue to remove accumulated greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Maryland must do its part.

If passed, SB0010 would finally remove one dirty source, trash incineration, from the Tier 1 this year. This bill, however, keeps the combustion of woody biomass and biogas, both equally or more polluting as coal and methane respectively.

- Burning woody biomass [releases 150% the CO₂ of coal](#) and 300-400% the CO₂ of natural gas, per unit of energy produced. It is more polluting and less efficient than coal. In addition, it removes vital carbon sequestration potential from our forests [and releases](#) cancer-causing and immune system- damaging benzene, dioxins, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, and nitrogen oxides amongst other chemicals.



- Biogas is primarily methane (CH₄) the same as “natural” gas which is [80 times more potent](#) in trapping heat than CO₂ in the first 20 years after its release, a critical time for emissions reduction. In addition, even biomethane, a purified version form of biogas, has been shown to be [more toxic](#) to humans than regular methane.

Continuing with all current Tier 1 RPS sources does not provide clean energy nor will it keep warming temperatures below 2° C (we have [already surpassed 1.5° C](#)).

Adding nuclear energy into the mix of “clean” sources is also wrong. Nuclear power plants, no matter what size, generate radioactive waste, a hazardous byproduct that no Marylander wants and nuclear installations have the potential for creating environmental catastrophes – more so now with extreme weather events.

In addition, incinerators, logging sites, pellet factories, thermal plants, biomass burning power plants, and biogas digesters are disproportionately placed amidst low income, underserved, and already overburdened communities, further impacting the most vulnerable among us.

If Maryland wants to keep and expand the RPS system, it needs to remove trash incineration, biogas combustion, and woody biomass combustion from the “Tier 1 Renewables” - a misnomer in itself since [“Renewable Energy”](#) as defined by the U.N., is energy derived from natural sources that are replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed. Neither trash, woody biomass, nor biogas are therefore renewable. Nuclear is not clean. The only clean and renewable sources are solar, wind, and geothermal and should be the only ones in the RPS or “Clean Energy” Portfolio Standard.

Time is running out. We have to eliminate emissions, not pretend that we’re taking the action needed by renaming dirty sources “clean.” We urge an unfavorable report on SB0434.

Thank you.

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