

Testimony Supporting HB438 / SB560
House Economic Matters Committee / Senate Finance Committee
February 20, 2020 / February 25, 2020

Position: SUPPORT

As a resident of district 43, I am writing to express my strong support of HB438/SB560 and the effort to remove trash incineration from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard. Burning trash is not clean energy, and Maryland's renewable energy subsidies should be used to support truly green energy like wind and solar, not trash incineration that pollutes our communities.

This issue is especially important to me because my mom has asthma, which she was diagnosed with about two years ago. Unfortunately, due to the BRESKO incinerator steadily releasing noxious fumes into the atmosphere, Baltimore has some of the highest air pollution levels and is one of the worst places to be living with asthma. But Baltimore also has some of the highest rates. 12.4% of adults living in Baltimore have asthma, compared with 8.4% statewide¹. The high level of particulate matter in Baltimore's air, caused in large part by BRESKO, is dangerous to everyone, often causing people to develop respiratory issues. We can't know if the poor air quality in Baltimore caused my mom's asthma, but it certainly isn't helping. Asthma has prevented my mom from feeling truly well for months. And I can't help but think of those less privileged living with asthma in Baltimore, who can't afford good treatments or occasional vacations from Baltimore's air pollution we could.

The time is coming for the BRESKO incinerator to give way to more sustainable waste management practices—and this is clearly possible since 80% of the waste BRESKO burns can be recycled or composted². If we find more responsible ways to dispose our trash, thus reducing harmful air pollution, it would be transformative for the health of our communities.

For all of these reasons and many more, I urge the House Economic Matters Committee to support HB438/SB560 and end subsidies for trash incineration in Maryland. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rachel Pontious

1) <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/node/454>

2) <https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2017/01/17/incinerator-critics-taking-aim-at-bresko/>