

Bill Title: House Bill 8, Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund – Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative - Use of Proceeds for Maryland Healthy Soils Program

Committee: Economic Matters

Date: January 14, 2021

Position: Favorable

This testimony is offered on behalf of Bioenergy Devco (BDC), a world leader in the finance, design, construction, engineering, and operation of anaerobic digestion facilities. With more than 220 anaerobic digestors built throughout the world, our expert team of engineers, biologists, chemists, agronomists, designers and marketing experts has over 20 years’ experience in the finance, design, construction and operation of anaerobic digester power plants and thus offers expertise in service, consultation and biological support with insured and guaranteed operation of each plant. We are proud to call Howard County and Maryland our US home.

House Bill 8 requires that – of the 20% of proceeds received by the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) from the sale of allowances under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) that are credited to a renewable and clean energy programs account – \$500,000 of those proceeds must be allocated to the Maryland Healthy Soils Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). The bill terminates September 30, 2026.

Established in 2017, the Healthy Soils Program is charged with improving the health, yield, and profitability of soils, increasing biological activity and carbon sequestration in agricultural soils, promoting further education and adoption of healthy soil practice. The Program, especially with increased funding under House Bill 8, will further encourage farmers who want to explore new technologies and farming techniques that promote soil health and its corresponding environmental benefits.

BDC uses anaerobic digestion to recycle organics once destined for incineration or already crowded landfills. This process creates renewable natural gas and supports the continued growth of healthy living soils through the production of “digestate.” Digestate is a wet mixture that is usually separated into a solid and a liquid. Digestate is rich in nutrients and can be used as a soil amendment promoting the reduction of compaction of out soils and as an organic supplement for crops.

In 2019, the General Assembly passed House Bill 511 which expanded the definition of “soil conditioner” under the commercial fertilizer law to include “digestate” produced by anaerobic digestion.” While this helped the industry, it all provides a sustainable and nutrient rich option for farming use. Passage of House Bill 8 will greatly assist identifying and implementing healthy soil options vital to the reduction of carbon in our air and the continued growth of our agriculture community.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a **favorable report on House Bill 8.**

For additional information, please contact Aaron Greenfield at 410.446.1992