



**Testimony Supporting HB 11- Reclaim Renewable Energy Act**  
**Economic Matters Committee**

March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

The Honorable Delegate C. T. Wilson  
The Honorable Brian M. Crosby, Vice-Chair  
Economic Matters Committee  
Room 231  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee,

As a grassroots organization of residents and businesses working to help Ocean City become the first zero waste resort town in the United States, we urge you to support HB11 and remove trash incineration from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard.

Maryland should not be subsidizing trash incineration in the Renewable Portfolio Standard; burning trash is simply not a source of clean energy. We don't need it to generate electricity, and we don't need it to dispose of our waste. Our efforts and the work of similar organizations across the state demonstrate that Maryland can build alternatives to trash incineration that are better for both the economy and the environment.

The process of incinerating trash creates an especially dangerous set of compounds called dioxins, declared by the World Health Organization as a known human carcinogen;<sup>1</sup> dioxins are also linked to diseases of the immune system, endocrine system, nervous system, and reproductive system. Air pollutants from waste incinerators have also shown to increase the risk of pre-term births, and lung and blood cancers<sup>2</sup>. Much of the thermal output and therefore electricity produced by incinerators comes from plastic waste, meaning they are ultimately burning fossil fuels. In the time that trash incineration has been subsidized through the RPS, those subsidies have not created new jobs; Maryland's incineration RECs only go to facilities that existed before the RPS was created. While propping up aging polluters, these subsidies make incinerators seem artificially cheaper compared to methods of managing our waste that produce neither pollution nor energy: like composting, repurposing, and source reduction.

Maryland ratepayers contributed over \$32 million to buy RECs from these dirty energy sources in

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization website; [https://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public\\_health/dioxins/en/](https://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/dioxins/en/)

<sup>2</sup> US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health;  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5637250/>

2019 alone, over \$200 million since 2008. These dirty energy sources are overwhelmingly located outside of Maryland, meaning that Maryland ratepayers' money is flowing out of state - \$108 million to dirty energy sources since 2008 in Virginia alone.

Ocean City sees over 300,000 visitors on a nice summer weekend, and all of those people currently produce a lot of trash. Ocean City is shipping that trash to an incinerator in Chester, Pennsylvania, the largest trash incinerator in the country. That facility has an enormous detrimental impact on the surrounding community. PBS reported in 2017 that 38.5% of children in Chester have asthma; that's nearly five times the national average. A quarter of the town's adults also have asthma. Furthermore, Chester residents are significantly more likely to develop lung cancer and ovarian cancer and die from a stroke or heart disease than other residents of their county. We don't like that Ocean City's trash is contributing to this environmental injustice – and so we decided to do something about it.

Our Director of Compost Operations, Garvey Heiderman, is the owner of The Hobbit Restaurant. In 2018, we piloted a compost program there that collected almost 2,000 pounds of waste in four weeks. We were able to take up to 50% of the waste produced by The Hobbit and divert it to be composted at a farm in Bishopville. In 2019, we raised over \$8000 to support program growth and in 2020 we diverted over 12,000 pounds of food waste. We quickly grew our program in 2021 to an astounding 80,000 pounds of food waste diversion. In 2022, we have a record 40 restaurants on the waitlist, 10-15 participating with a goal of 500,000 pounds. We even had a [Maryland Representative](#) visit our farm and the [Mayor of Ocean City](#) too! Restaurant composting can quickly and efficiently get enormous amounts of food scraps out of the waste stream, and onto farms where it benefits the farmer. Compost can bring back cropland that has been desolate and drained of nutrients for years. From our coastal point of view, it is phenomenal for preventing runoff from leeching into the groundwater and into the watershed, helping to protect our local quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

Covanta charges nearly \$88/per ton to take our waste and burn it at the Chester trash incinerator. We currently estimate the town of Ocean City transporting nearly 10,000 tons of compostable products. Through scaling up these zero waste programs, we are saving the town of Ocean City money by not having to transport a significant percent of waste up to Pennsylvania. The money saved could be used to fuel composting, recycling and educational programs.

In 2010, Ocean City decided to eliminate recycling pickup, and 20 local residents lost their jobs in that sector. By composting, we plan to create 10-15 local jobs. Studies show that on a per-ton basis, composting employs 2x more workers than landfills and 4x more than incinerators. We want those jobs to benefit Eastern Shore residents and improve our economy and environment.

Continuing to subsidize trash incineration is counterproductive to this goal. Maryland doesn't need to throw our renewable energy money away on burning trash. The alternatives to trash incineration are better for our communities in every way, and groups like ours across the state are making it happen.

**Please support HB11 so that these subsidies won't stand in the way of building a better zero waste future.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joshua Chamberlain". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

Joshua Chamberlain  
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