



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

P.O. Box 6988 Largo, MD 20792
www.ProgressiveMaryland.org
Contact@ProgressiveMaryland.org
Facebook.com/ProgressiveMaryland
@Progressive_MD

Testimony on Maryland House Bill 718 Reclaim Renewable Energy Act

TO: Chair Wilson, Speaker of the House Jones, and members of the committee

FROM: Margaree Nadler, Member of Progressive Maryland

DATE: March 9, 2023

POSITION: Favorable

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots nonprofit organization with regional chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our strong support for HB718.

In the last few years, Baltimore has embraced efforts that better our city and environment. We have successfully banned plastic bags and Styrofoam, while businesses have attempted to curb single-use plastic consumption. Yet, we continue to subsidize the city's number one polluter by allowing Wheelabrator to function under the guise of renewable energy.

I am a resident of Baltimore, located in the 46th District. I believe protecting Wheelabrator with incentives reserved for renewable energy efforts hamper our city's ability to embrace environmental change fully. Detractors of this bill testified before the Senate last week citing issues with landfill space and with no vision of Baltimore moving towards a zero-waste future. However, they fail to acknowledge that this bill does not intend to fully shut down the incinerator at this time, but instead seeks to free Baltimore taxpayers from the cost of subsidizing the waste incineration that is polluting our city. Further, to keep the incinerator in service, the city must hinder recycling and composting efforts to create the constant stream of waste that the incinerator demands. In 2019, Wheelabrator sued Baltimore County for not delivering its promised amount of refuse, essentially holding the county taxpayers hostage in a move that actively disincentivizes more sustainable options.

The incinerator also impacts the health of Baltimore's most underrepresented and vulnerable communities. Incinerators like Wheelabrator are disproportionately installed in low-income and impoverished areas where the primary residents are people of color. In Baltimore, the adverse health effects are staggering - the life expectancy for children born in Cherry Hill, the area where the incinerator is located, is 10 years less than the statewide average. I've heard members of the Cherry Hill community speak about how they have watched their family

members suffer and die of respiratory issues, cardiovascular illness, and cancer. I can also speak to my health struggles - I never experienced so much as allergies until I moved to Baltimore, and I now suffer from frequent respiratory problems. I do not doubt that the incinerator's pollutants have exasperated those issues.

I implore the House to consider the price these subsidizes are truly paying in the form of the health issues suffered by Baltimore residents and the sustainable alternatives to composting and recycling that this incinerator denies.

For these reasons, **we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB718.**

Margaree Nadler