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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 718

Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2023

Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart

March 9, 2023 • Economic Matters Committee

What does the bill do:

The Reclaim Renewable Energy Act (HB 718) will alter the energy sources that Maryland includes in Tier 1 of the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) by removing three energy sources: trash incineration, biogas from farm waste, and woody biomass. These energy sources are dirty and the jobs associated with them are mostly located outside the state of Maryland. Additionally, the companies that benefit from these ratepayer dollars are highly profitable—they don't need these funds to continue operations.

Why this bill is important:

Trash incineration, anaerobic digestion, and the processing of woody biomass have negative impacts on human health, our environment, and Maryland's economy. First, waste incineration facilities release a compound called dioxins, a carcinogen linked to diseases of the immune system, endocrine system, nervous system, and reproductive system. Persistent organic pollutants emitted from waste incineration facilities do not break down naturally; instead, these substances move across other states, polluting the entire ecosystem.

Second, biogas produced from anaerobic digestion is primarily composed of methane and carbon dioxide, with lesser amounts of hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, and other gasses. Each of these gasses have safety issues that pose a threat to workers and have significant impacts on air quality and human health. Finally, woody biomass removal can cause a drain of organic matter and nutrients from the environment, harming soil quality, and future productivity.

Every year, Maryland taxpayers spend \$30 million to buy renewable energy credits from not-so-renewable energy sources. Moreover, the facilities are largely located outside Maryland: We are funding trash incinerators miles away instead of wind and solar energy here in Maryland. In 2020, more than a third of renewable energy credits came from waste-to-energy sources. These dirty energy sources contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, along with the destruction of potentially useful materials, and steer us away from the initial goals of the RPS program.

Why committee should vote favorably:

Including dirty energy sources in the RPS harms ratepayers, impedes job growth, causes sickness, and pollutes the state. Maryland's ratepayers spend about \$30 million annually to buy RECs from dirty energy sources that are overwhelmingly located outside the state. We are funding trash incinerators in Virginia and anaerobic digesters in Delaware at the expense of wind and solar jobs in Maryland. We as a legislature should be thinking through where state money is going and which businesses we are supporting. Trash incineration, anaerobic digestion, and woody biomass are not the future of clean energy in this state, and we should not be handing them tax credits. **I urge a favorable report.**