

Montgomery County Climate Action Plan Coalition

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB718 - Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2023

Organization: MoCo CAP Coalition (Montgomery County Climate Action Plan Coalition)

Submitting: Diana Younts

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 9, 2023

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today. The MoCo CAP Coalition is a Montgomery County-wide Coalition of grassroots organizations dedicated to helping our County reach the goal of its Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035. We urge you to vote favorably on HB718:

- HB718 is priority legislation for Montgomery County
- In session on February 27, in affirming Council's support for the bill after learning that Montgomery County earned \$6.2 mil in REC revenue in 2022 from the County's incinerator, Council President Evan Glass stated, "That is a cost of progress."

HB718 takes Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) back to its original purpose – to incentivize the production of clean, renewable energy. It does so by removing dirty sources of energy from the RPS – trash incineration, biogas methane from the anaerobic digestion of chicken waste, and the burning of woody biomass.

- Burning trash is not clean.
 - It actively harms the health of the communities that surround incinerators and shortens the average lifespan of those community members; and
 - The financial incentives for those incinerators impede the development of zero waste solutions that would divert organics and other materials from the waste stream.
- Gas produced from anaerobic decomposition of animal and poultry waste is not clean.
 - Factory Farm methane is as dirty as burning or leaking fracked gas;
 - the incentives for the building of new processing facilities locks us into the factory farm system; and
 - It allows for "greenwashing" by the gas utilities to claim they are moving toward renewable energy without making systemic changes to the pipeline infrastructure that depends on fracked gas.
- Burning woody biomass is not clean.
 - Under current RPS standards, woody biomass qualifies as a tier 1 source of thermal energy when used in the anaerobic digestion of chicken waste. As

- such, it releases methane when produced.
- Moreover, disallowing woody biomass from the RPS would forestall efforts to expand greater inclusion of woody biomass in the RPS, the further expansion of dirty sources of energy in the RPS, and further [deforestation](#) by the biomass-for-energy industry.

According to a [Report](#) released last year by PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility), Maryland taxpayers have paid more than \$189 million to subsidize dirty energy facilities in Virginia and Maryland since 2008, and the Report further projected Marylanders will spend \$311 million more for such dirty energy between now until 2030, and much of it does not even provide energy to Maryland or jobs for Marylanders.

For instance, According to the Report as reported by a 2022 article in [Maryland Matters](#), we Marylanders spent more than \$26 million since 2014 purchasing energy credits from a facility in Virginia that burns wood waste to produce energy for Virginia.

In short, burning trash, animal waste, and wood waste pollutes the environment, harms nearby communities' health, and contributes to climate change: a bad investment of public dollars that every Maryland utility ratepayer contributes to. Every Renewable Energy Credit that goes toward a facility that emits greenhouse gasses is a Renewable Energy Credit taken away from a facility that does not - an egregious waste of public money.

Governor Moore has pledged to reach 100% renewable energy by 2035. Climate Solutions Now requires Maryland to have no greenhouse gas pollutants by 2040. We cannot reach either goal if we incentivize dirty energy and allow it to displace clean energy.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report for HB718.

Respectfully Submitted,

MoCo CAP Coalition:

350 MoCo

ACQ Climate

Bethesda Green

Biodiversity for a

Livable Climate

Chesapeake Climate

Action Network

Elders Climate Action

Environmental Justice Ministry

Cedar Lane UU Church

Friends of Sligo Creek

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization

Green Sanctuary Committee of

UU Church of Silver Spring

Montgomery County Faith Alliance

For Climate Solutions

One Montgomery Green

Safe Healthy Playing Fields

Sugarloaf Citizens Assn

Takoma Park Mobilization

Environment Committee

The Climate Mobilization

Transit Alternative to Mid County

Highway Extension

Karen Metchis, Bethesda Md

Lucy McFadden, Bethesda Md

