



**HB718 – Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources - Alterations (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2023)**

**Testimony before House Economic Matters Committee**

**March 09, 2023**

**Position: Favorable**

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Peter Alexander and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB718**, Reclaim Renewable Energy Act. We appreciate the leadership of Delegate Stewart and his colleagues for sponsoring this important legislation.

This can keeps getting kicked down the road.

HB718 will eliminate three types of energy from Maryland's RPS: trash incineration, woody biomass, and factory farm methane gas. All three of these pollute the environment, harm nearby communities' health, and contribute to climate change.

Air pollutants from waste incinerators increase the risk of pre-term births, cancers of the blood and lung, and emergency room visits. These adverse health effects unnecessarily result in tens of millions of dollars in healthcare costs in Maryland. Removing trash incineration won't prevent the release of these airborne toxins, but it's incineration shouldn't be subsidized.

Anaerobic digestion of factory farm waste creates methane out of something that would not otherwise have become methane if left as undigested dry waste without mitigating the factory farm air quality problems. Methane, 80-fold more potent than CO2 as a greenhouse gas, exacerbates climate change through gas leaks and its combustion to form CO2. Anaerobic digestion shouldn't be subsidized.

Woody biomass **seems** renewable. Trees grow back. However, newly planted trees have far less benefit than a mature tree or a fully-functioning forest. Further, burning trees releases CO2 immediately. That carbon isn't recaptured until newly planted trees grow to maturity over many decades. Burning woody biomass shouldn't be subsidized.

Subsidizing these seemingly renewable materials takes money away from real renewable energy programs and drives waste markets toward the worst methods of waste management. Subsidies exist to support the things we want, so why are we subsidizing things we don't want?

It's time to stop kicking this can and enact these important alterations to the RPS. Let's put RPS subsidies toward wind and solar power, and let the waste sector work on managing waste.

**We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.**

Peter Alexander, PhD  
Woodbine, MD