

HB 718 – SUPPORT

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Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2023

House Economic Matters Committee

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Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

I was born and raised in Baltimore City and am now a practicing public health family physician living in Potomac MD. I see low income patients at a federally qualified health center. My patients suffer disproportionately from respiratory illnesses due to environmental pollution.

As a physician I am alarmed by the emphasis to replace plants powered by dirty fossil fuel such as coal, oil, and gas with other plants powered by other dirty fuels. Biomass as energy is a dirty fuel that pollutes as much -or more- than some traditional fossil fuels. This makes them a false climate solution that a handful of big corporations are profiting from in expense of the health of most of us. Turning a power plant from burning coal to burning woody biomass such as discussed for Allegany County's Warrior Run plant is a false energy solution that perpetuates environmental injustices and syphons funds away from truly renewable energy sources.

Biomass facilities emit high levels of particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO2), lead, mercury, and other hazardous air pollutants. These cause cancer, birth defects, affect the immune system, and can lead to death. In fact, the global cost of health damages associated with exposure to air pollution is \$8.1 trillion, equivalent to 6.1 percent of global GDP according to the World Bank. Moreover, polluting biomass energy plants impact the health of our most vulnerable communities first and worst as they are being established in 'opportunity zones', among people with low- and middle-income, in those communities already most affected by mortality and morbidity from air pollution. Adding to this, pellet manufacturing facilities for woody biomass energy add dangerous air pollutants including toxic dust, particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds which actively harm the communities surrounding these plants in the processing of the wood prior to burning it. Locking in biomass energy through continued subsidies would lock in dramatic and expensive health impacts along with greenhouse gas emissions.

Whether from wood, trash, or CAFOS, burning biomass is not clean. Swapping one polluting fuel source for another is not a pathway to a healthy energy system. Wind, solar, and hydropower are the only healthy energy sources available for generating electricity, powering our factories, and heating our homes and the only type of energy we should consider investing in. We urge you to support cleaning up the RPS by removing all THREE dirty options: trash incineration, factory farm biogas, and woody biomass.

Thank you!

I urge a favorable report on HB 718.