

**HOUSE BILL 718: Reclaim Renewable Energy Act**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Vaughn Stewart

**Committee:** Economic Matters Committee

**Person Submitting:** Monica Brooks

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Wilson and Committee Members:

My name is Monica Brooks. I am writing as a mom, grandmom, and Eastern Shore resident in support of House Bill 718 calling for a clean up of the Maryland RPS. Over the last few years I have testified about high respiratory disease rates on the shore, and I have testified regarding the health problems that my family, particularly my daughter, has experienced. I shared with this committee that she's been prescribed an inhaler and diagnosed with asthma although asthma does not run in our family. And how my vibrant daughter has had multiple trips to the ER because she could not breathe. Do you know what it's like to see your child helpless and struggling to breathe? Gasping for breath and looking to you to alleviate the suffering. My granddaughter is also a victim suffering from asthma. We have a huge problem with our air.

The Eastern Shore is being flooded by large concentrated animal feeding operations known as CAFOs. These operations each have 18 industrial fans releasing toxins into our air for our children to breathe. Each one of these monstrosities produces tons of manure and ammonia. CAFOs are being placed dangerously close to neighborhoods and schools with no consideration for the health and safety of communities. One such 4 house CAFO was placed right across from the playground of my daughter's school! Just a few years ago I was in a 2 year fight to prevent a 13 house no land CAFO project from coming to my neighborhood and won!

The latest bill of goods our community is being sold is the magic of "biogas". They tell us it will handle the manure problem, it will make things better for communities and farmers. While this all sounds convenient - we know it isn't true. Numerous case studies show that when these large, industrial digesters are built, they bring more waste into neighborhoods and even help make the case for more CAFOs.

To put more salt onto the wound, there was a gasification plant being proposed last fall, right down the road from where I live called Earth Care LLC. This gasification plant would have taken poultry litter, fats, greases, municipal sewage sludge in order to produce methane gas. The community that this was being proposed in is in a low-income, predominantly black and non-english speaking residents who also live right next to the Wicomico Landfill. Imagine fighting off a 13-poultry house CAFO project and then a few years later, find out that now a gasification plant wants to build with Maryland tax payer dollars- \$2.24 million to be exact from the Animal Waste Technology Fund. The funding was pulled luckily due to the overwhelming concerns about the false narrative the company was trying to portray as a composting facility, as well as the placement in an already overburdened community.

There is a sadly similar story down the road in Delaware. A Bioenergy Devco facility (that could receive subsidies from the Maryland RPS) is currently being proposed next to a mobile home community now facing a Title VI complaint. It promises to bring waste from four different states into this community. They claim it will benefit farmers, but hope to take processing facility fats, oils, grease, wood materials, and hatchery waste in addition to poultry litter. Some of these facilities want to take municipal waste, too.

Families of the Eastern Shore are crying out for your help. Don't make this problem worse by allowing CAFOs in Maryland to call their waste "renewable" and be paid for by ratepayers in dollars and pollution. There is nothing renewable about guaranteeing an industrial waste stream in residential communities. Stop this problem before it takes hold in Maryland.

Why so much opposition against regulating polluters? Why is it ok to continue to put our lives at risk? Is industry more important than people? The problem is already that there is too much - we can't let the industry come up with their own solutions. Excess ammonia, particulate matter and manure is a problem. And the more factory farms there are, the more opportunities there are to make our air more toxic than it already is. The more digesters there are, the more opportunity there is to make money off this pollution. This mother is pleading with you to pump the brakes on an industry already out of control by passing a favorable vote for House Bill 718.