

Year after year, since 2011, 12 years now...we, residents from environmental justice communities come to these hearing rooms to talk about what our policy makers choose to define as renewable energy AND what those choices do to our lives and our communities.

It is mind blowing and quite frankly disappointing that we would ever be saying that burning trash - including a growing amount of plastics that are made of non-renewable fossil fuels - and pollute the air of communities - mainly communities of color and low income - is clean and renewable and WORTHY OF our public resources. BUT ...that's exactly what we have been doing in Maryland since, 2011. It's a mistake, and it can be corrected. That's why we show up every single year.

Baltimore communities have also, year after year, reported the health impacts of incineration to officials to make our expectation clear that incineration must be left behind. If that wasn't enough the Chesapeake Bay Foundation commissioned a study that found that the BRESKO Incinerator cost 55 million dollars a year in health damages - and that was from one pollutant alone. Many of the impacts of burning an ever growing volume of plastics are only beginning to be understood - but the early findings are terrifying. So, imagine from the perspective of a Maryland voter who is being asked to subsidize a technology that makes us sick through a program meant to support clean energy... It works against what we so desperately need - trust in our ability to address health and climate change in an equitable manner. We've got to get this right. Belief in the lofty commitments for environmental justice - is at stake.

We have been working with our Baltimore community, our mayor, city council, and bedrock institutions like Johns Hopkins to accelerate our just transition to get needed zero waste infrastructure built. What I can tell you is incredibly helpful is Maryland officials passing a landmark policy that seeks to end the harmful practice of sending food waste to an incinerator - this moves us in the right direction and is making a positive difference on the ground. I also must tell you what is harmful - this ongoing policy of classifying incineration as renewable - just as our city is making good faith efforts to move in the consensus right direction.

What is being burned that MD is calling renewable? I'll break it down: nearly 40% is food waste and organics...and in the coming years that percent will go way down because of good policy. Most of what's left is recyclable and reusable...things like paper, glass, furniture, e-scrap, etc... and those materials will be diverted from the incinerator as Baltimore increases investment in improving our recycling and re-use sectors. What's left is largely single use plastics ...which again are made up of fossil fuels and are incredibly harmful to burn...which is the original purpose of creating the RPS ...to stop burning fossil fuels.

To wrap up, we are here to tell our state to stop making it their job and our job as residents to support private companies that can succeed or fail on their own. These companies WANT these subsidies but they DON'T NEED them in order to operate. BRESKO existed without this policy for decades...so while they may claim they can't survive without the subsidies, I am here to tell you that history/facts have determined that to be a lie. It's silly for them to claim they need the subsidies, then also make claims about how they are committing to donating money in the city, as they are likely going to say. We don't want it. We want the subsidies they are getting to be going to wind and solar power instead. That will do us more good. Please pass this bill to make it happen.