



Testimony Supporting SB590
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 28, 2023

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

The Community of Curtis Bay Association (CCBA), located in District 46, is writing in strong support of SB590, the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act, as a critical step towards addressing climate change and advancing a just transition to Zero Waste:

REDIRECT SUBSIDIES for the incinerators, landfills and dirty energy we are transitioning away from

BUILD AND STRENGTHEN LOCAL END MARKETS for compost, recycled commodities and truly renewable energy.

STRONGER STANDARDS that protect our health, worker safety and our shared environment, including a Cumulative Impacts law that takes into account the pollution sources a community already has when considering new polluting developments.

HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDING to mitigate the costs of hosting toxic waste infrastructure for decades --- paired with a “Just Transition for Zero Waste and green infrastructure Fund” to develop new community-owned compost, recycling, deconstruction, reuse and green infrastructure to end reliance on toxic waste and energy infrastructure.

PROTECTIONS for sanitation and other workers as we transition from outdated technologies to current approaches

Curtis Bay is a frontline Environmental Justice community that sits near the majority of Baltimore’s regional waste infrastructure - including the city’s worst single source of air pollution - the BRESKO Incinerator. Incineration is an outmoded false solution to managing the bi-products of production and consumption. As we work to reduce waste down to zero through smart public policy the calls for engineering a world without waste, we should be shifting to infrastructure that responsibly composts, recycles and re-uses residuals. The last thing we should do is link the production of energy to the practice of wasting.



Sandly, our community has had to deal not only with the impacts of two nearby incinerators (BRESCO plus the nation's largest medical waste incinerator) but from 2009-2016 a tremendous amount of our energy as a community was consumed with resisting the plan to build the nation's largest trash burning incinerator less than a mile from our schools and homes. The branding of incinerators as renewable energy, codified in MD state law, made this proposed development incredibly misleading to public institutions seeking to do the right thing by purchasing renewable energy. Imagine the undermining of public trust when students throughout our regional school districts learned that their building would be powered, in part, by a trash burning incinerator that would be polluting the air their friends in South Baltimore would breathe everyday.

Thankfully, students and residents worked together to persuade public officials to change course on that proposed development and stopped it. From 2015 to the present, residents also helped develop a path forward that ends reliance on incineration and reduces use of landfills through development of new zero waste infrastructure including compost facilities supported, now, by MD's organic diversion legislation. We are proud to have contributed to these efforts and believe full in Maryland's zero waste future.

A critical next step is to remove ongoing support for dirt trash incinerators that slows progress towards both clean renewable energy and zero waste goals. You see, As long as we prop up large trash incinerators, local waste diversion goals will be undermined by a strong pressure to continue feeding the burners. Some incinerators even mandate and sue municipalities for not sending enough waste (as was the case recently when Baltimore County was sued by the private equity firm who owns the BRESCO incinerator).

Hopefully, we can all agree and act upon the common sense idea that we should be supporting businesses that help us waste less not more! Add to this the fact, that the true cost of burning trash is not currently accounted for in the corporate balance sheets. Health and environmental costs will continue to be passed onto those who live in communities like Curtis Bay in 2 main forms: first, increased asthma and other respiratory diseases and cancers and second, weakened community economic development potential in the form of more vacant homes, fewer small businesses and declining sense of belief in the ability to improve our community.

Curtis Bay will never give up...we have been through over a hundred years of industrial disaster after industrial disaster. We have already lost our three former neighboring communities forever due to involuntary displacement brought upon by policy that prioritized polluting industry over the health and safety of voting workers and residents. Now, we are looking for concrete action from Annapolis that our state officials aren't giving up on us in Curtis Bay.



This bill will make sure that our subsidies for renewable energy through the Renewable Portfolio Standard are going toward actual renewable energy, not being wasted on things that emit greenhouse gasses and add even more health burdens to environmental justice communities. We are in a climate crisis, and we cannot afford to be spending our renewable energy money on facilities that pollute. Now is the time to double down on Maryland's commitment to truly renewable energy and subsidize only facilities that are emissions-free.

This bill 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. Subsidizing them takes money away from the real renewable energy that we need, and it also tilts waste markets toward the worst methods of managing our waste. Subsidies exist to support the things we want, so why are we subsidizing things we don't want in our communities? Let's put those subsidies toward wind and solar power, and let the waste sector work on managing waste.

Please support SB590 and stop sending Maryland's renewable energy money to facilities that emit such enormous amounts of greenhouse gasses. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Community of Curtis Bay Association

www.ilovecurtisbay.com