

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

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

The undersigned **54 organizations** urge you to support the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act ([SB590](#)) to eliminate three problematic polluters from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS): trash incineration, factory farm methane, and woody biomass. This legislation would make sure that Maryland ratepayers are getting what they're paying for: renewable energy dollars going to support actual renewable energy.

Since 2008, Maryland ratepayers have spent [over \\$200 million](#) on Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) from dirty sources misclassified as "renewable." That money should have been supporting the development of new wind and solar power instead of being thrown away to profit polluters.

Trash incineration was added to Tier 1 of the RPS in 2011. Before then, it had been in Tier 2, designed to sunset by 2019. In the original design of the RPS, trash incineration would no longer be eligible for subsidies by 2023. Incinerating trash creates greenhouse gas emissions as well as harmful local air pollution, and disincentivizes the [better alternatives](#) for handling our trash: reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting. Our communities are [working to move forward](#) with those better alternatives, and it's time for the state to stop holding us back. Now, while we're building the better infrastructure we need, is the time to start subsidizing the things we want and stop subsidizing the things we don't.

Factory farm methane gas, otherwise known as anaerobic digestion or "biogas," [produces methane](#). No matter the source, methane is methane. Whether drilled out of the ground or manufactured from waste, methane produces CO₂ when burned for energy. Methane also leaks, and when it does, it is an even more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂. As with trash incineration, subsidizing factory farm waste management with "renewable" energy subsidies skews the markets in favor of more pollution. Digesters [would not solve nutrient runoff problems](#) from farm waste; they would exacerbate it. [There are no such facilities in Maryland now](#), but developers are proposing to build them across the Delmarva region. Now is the time to take this problem out of the RPS.

Maryland's **woody biomass** subsidies mostly go to out-of-state sawmills and paper mills burning their own products to power their own operations. These facilities harm the health of nearby communities, and harm the climate. A recent [Harvard School of Public Health Study](#) found that biomass and wood have the fastest-growing share of early deaths in the major energy-consuming sectors; burning wood for electricity produces [as much or more](#) pollution than fossil fuels, including coal. Let's stop wasting our "renewable energy" money on these out-of-state facilities.

Two years ago, the legislature wisely eliminated black liquor, a polluting paper mill byproduct, from the RPS. That action freed up the money that was being wasted to support real renewable energy instead. For all of the good reasons the legislature eliminated black liquor from the RPS, we urge you to pass the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act ([SB590](#)) in 2023.

Sincerely,

Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition

Clean Water Action, Emily Ranson, Maryland Director

Food and Water Watch, Jorge Aguilar, Southern Region Director

South Baltimore Community Land Trust, Shashawnda Campbell, Director of Environmental Justice Communities

Baltimore City Council District 10, Phylicia Porter, Councilwoman for Baltimore's Tenth District

Zero Waste Montgomery County, Amy Maron, Co-Founder

Sentinels of Eastern Shore Health, Michael Payan, Co-founder

NAACP Maryland State Conference, Staci Hartwell, Chair, Environmental and Climate Justice Committee

League of Conservation Voters, Kristen Harbeson, Political Director

Sugarloaf Citizens Association, Steven Findlay, President

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, Brige Dumais, Political Coordinator

Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home, Dr James S Cleghorn, Organizer

Mountain Maryland Movement, Frostburg, MD, Annie Bristow, Convener

Progressive Maryland, SirJames Weaver , Environmental Justice Organizer

Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church Creation Care Team, Liz Feighner, Creation Care Team Member

Maryland Latinos Unidos, Gabriela D Lemus, Executive Director

Waterkeepers Chesapeake, Robin Broder, Acting Executive Director

Centro de Apoyo Familiar, Walkiria Pool, President

Beyond Extreme Energy, Andrew Hinz, Member

Baltimore Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter Veterans For Peace, Ellen Barfield, Co-Founder and Chapter Coordinator

Indivisible Howard County, Peter Alexander, Member, Climate Action Team

Locust Point Community Garden, Dave Arndt, Director

Envision Frederick County, Karen Cannon, Executive Director

Echotopia LLC, Diane Wittner, Principal

Baltimore Jewish Council, Abby Snyder, Director of Government Relations

Sustainable Hyattsville, Greg Smith, Board Member

Environmental Integrity Project, Courtney Bernhardt, Director of Research

Blue Water Baltimore, Taylor Smith-Hams, Advocacy & Outreach Senior Manager

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland, Phil Webster, Lead Advocate, Climate Change

Cedar Lane Environmental Justice Ministry, Lee McNair, Member

Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Jamie DeMarco, Maryland Director

Sunrise Movement Baltimore, Anne Wilson, Hub coordinator

Safe Healthy Playing Fields Inc, Diana Conway, President

Potomac Riverkeeper Network, Betsy Nicholas, Vice President of Programs

Climate Reality Greater Maryland, Frances Stewart, Chapter Chair

Elders Climate Action Maryland, Frances Stewart, Chapter Co-leader

National Aquarium, Ryan Fredriksson, VP, Government Affairs

Environmental Justice Ministry, Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, Nanci Wilkinson, EJM Team

Gunpowder Riverkeeper, Theaux M. Le Gardeur, Gunpowder Riverkeeper

Maryland PIRG, Emily Scarr, Director

Our Revolution Maryland, Hal Ginsberg, State Organizer

HoCo Climate Action, Liz Feighner, Steering Committee

Doctors for Camp Closure, Kate Sugarman, Maryland Director

Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair

Baltimore 350, David J Neun, Founder

Sunrise Movement Frederick, Davin Faris, Hub Coordinator

Climate Communications Coalition, Sonia Demiray, Co-founder

Indivisible Howard County, Peter Alexander, Member, Climate Action Team

Clean Air Baltimore Coalition, Stephanie Compton, Baltimore Organizer

Energy Justice Network, Mike Ewall, Executive Director

DoTheMostGood, Olivia Bartlett, DTMG Maryland Team

Bethesda Green, Jordan Lee, Communications Associate

Biodiversity for a Livable Climate, Philip Bogdonoff, President, Board of Directors; Director, Washington DC Chapter

Maryland Legislative Coalition, Cecilia Plante, Co-Chair