



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill 590 Reclaim Renewable Energy Act

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee

FROM: Margaree Nadler, Member of Progressive Maryland

DATE: February 28, 2023

POSITION: Favorable

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots nonprofit organization with regional chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. **Please note our strong support for SB590.**

In the last few years, Baltimore has embraced efforts that better our city and environment. We have successfully banned plastic bags and Styrofoam, while businesses have attempted to curb single-use plastic consumption. Yet, we continue to subsidize the city's number one polluter by allowing Wheelabrator to function under the guise of renewable energy.

I am a resident of Baltimore, located in the 46th District. When I moved to Baltimore four years ago, I was struck by the beautiful city skyline that greets everyone who enters via I-95. At the time, I didn't realize one of the signature parts of that view was the incinerator, but I quickly learned that it was responsible for the haze I would see settling over that part of the city and the culprit of most pollutants in our city air.

Protecting Wheelabrator with incentives reserved for renewable energy efforts hamper our city's ability to embrace environmental change fully. Supporters of Wheelabrator will argue that it will take decades for Baltimore to move to a zero-waste model, and the only alternative until then is to incinerate our city's trash. However, to keep the incinerator in service, the city must hinder recycling and composting efforts to create the constant stream of waste that the incinerator demands. In 2019, Wheelabrator sued Baltimore County for not delivering its promised amount of refuse, essentially holding the county taxpayers hostage in a move that actively disincentivizes more sustainable options.

The incinerator also impacts the health of Baltimore's most underrepresented and vulnerable communities. Incinerators like Wheelabrator are disproportionately installed in low-income and impoverished areas where the primary residents are people of color. In Baltimore, the

adverse health effects are staggering - the life expectancy for children born in Cherry Hill, the area where the incinerator is located, is 10 years less than the statewide average. I've heard members of the Cherry Hill community speak about how they have watched their family members suffer and die of respiratory issues, cardiovascular illness, and cancer. I can also speak to my health struggles - I never experienced so much as allergies until I moved to Baltimore, and I now suffer from frequent respiratory problems. I do not doubt that the incinerator's pollutants have exasperated those issues.

I implore you to listen to the residents of Cherry Hill and the members of the Baltimore community as they speak on the damage the incinerator has done to our environment and health. I hope you recognize the power in opportunities provided by clean and real renewable energy options and will revoke trash incineration's status as renewable energy so Baltimore can move forward to more healthy and sustainable alternatives.

For these reasons, **we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB590.**

Margaree Nadler