



Testimony HB 1407 - Position: OPPOSED

Renewable Sources Generating Systems, Capacity, and Generation- Prohibition, Studies, and Plans

February 29, 2024

My name is Sonia Demiray. I am the co-founder of the Climate Communications Coalition, a member of the Climate Forest Campaign, the Eastern Forest Group, and the Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition – among others, and a resident of Frederick County.

The **Climate Communications Coalition**, together with **Concerned Citizens Against Industrial CAFOS**, and **Elders Climate Action Maryland**, oppose HB1407 because, if it should become law, it would curtail the autonomy of local county governments across Maryland. Particularly, it would impact counties' ability to adopt reasonable and safe zoning laws, including laws that restrict polluting 'Renewable Source' Generating Systems or Facilities siting across the State. This bill could essentially limit the power of local governments to protect the communities and environment which they serve.

Local governments plan and provide facilities and services including schools, hospitals, highways, police, libraries, parks, etc. Planning and zoning is a key task because, by definition, local government is on the ground and knows best what is needed and where. Most Maryland counties approach government from a perspective of participation, inclusion, and accountability.

It would be irresponsible to remove the fundamental authority to decide where to place Tier 1 Renewable Source Generating Systems and Facilities from a county government. Tier 1 of the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) still includes very polluting and harmful "renewable" sources and facilities. In fact, they still include incinerators and power plants that could run on waste or woody biomass for energy, biomass pellet manufacturing plants, thermal biomass systems, biogas digesters, and more. These plants emit Volatile Organic Compounds and Hazardous Air Pollutants which routinely violate the Clean Air Act and have a horrible effect on the health of the residents and the environment. Residents of each county, together with their local government, should be able to engage in a democratic process for any zoning change – especially one that could firmly plant polluting industries in our midst for decades to come.

Counties also need the ability to protect and provide for the most vulnerable among us, including low income and frontline communities. For example "opportunity zones" which promise federal tax incentives to organizations in order to incentivize investments and economically uplift underserved groups, routinely attract the most polluting industries because residents don't have the bandwidth to fight back. It is a county government's responsibility to protect these communities and compromised landscapes from further harm, including from Renewable Source Generating Systems or Facilities. We urge you to oppose HB1407. Thank you.

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