

**House Bill 1112 – SUPPORT WITH MODIFICATION**

**Public Service Commission – Energy Storage Devices – Acquisition  
Economic Matters Committee  
March 7, 2024**

My name is John Garofolo. I live in the beautiful community of Stoney Beach – a 62-acre peninsula community in Curtis Bay in Northern Anne Arundel County with 1.2 miles of shoreline bordering the Patapsco River, Stoney Creek, and Cox Creek. I am a scientist, an Anne Arundel Watershed Steward Academy (WSA) - Master Watershed Steward, a citizen environmentalist, a boater, and I have previously been on the board of directors of my community association. My community and our environment are very important to me and to all citizens of our area in residential Anne Arundel Patapsco Waterway communities in Curtis Bay, Glen Burnie, and Pasadena.

**All 458 homes in my community are within just hundreds of feet of the Wagner and Brandon Shores Power Generation Station.** We are at Ground 0 for its pollution in the forms of coal dust. Coal ash, and gaseous emissions from these power plants include Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) which are known to cause airway damage in humans leading to asthma and heart disease and other toxins which are carcinogenic such as Benzo(a)pyrene, lead, and fine particulates. Our community and surrounding communities have been subjected to the pollution from these power plants for decades. In 2023, MDE detected Benzo(a)pyrene in the sediment taken from dredge in the very narrow channel of Cox Creek just between our community and the Wagner Power Generation Station. This is an airborne toxin created from coal burning and tells us that we've been exposed to high levels of toxins from the power plants for a very long time. While the plant owners employed technology on the newer Brandon Shores plant in the 2010s to reduce SO<sub>2</sub> emissions, it made no such updates to the Wagner plant which was built in the 1950s and had never been updated since its construction. And little to no mitigations of other toxins have been implemented in either plant and the watershed is now highly polluted.

Anecdotally, we seem to have high rates of asthma, heart disease, and especially cancer in our area. Health statistics in communities near the power plants have yet to be analyzed, even though we asked MDE for this information in 2016. We were told that it was “too difficult to compile.”

In 2016, after I learned that the EPA had declared the entire greater Baltimore area a sulfur dioxide non-attainment zone by the EPA from a newspaper story, with a little digging I was shocked to find out that it was because of the two power plants that were my next-door neighbors. I also learned that there was no EPA-certified SO<sub>2</sub> monitor within 50 miles of our community. I organized my community to meet with the Sierra Club and our legislators and MDE and then a bigger meeting including all area communities to discuss the issue. MDE fought taking any action or even adding a SO<sub>2</sub> monitor in our area for some time – citing expense.

We worked with our legislators to create legislation that required MDE to place a SO<sub>2</sub> monitor nearby and in 2018, a SO<sub>2</sub> monitor was finally placed in the community of Riviera Beach just across Stoney Creek from our community. This immediately caused the plant owners, Raven Power, to be more careful about their emissions and they began throttling the Wagner plant to stay below average hourly EPA ceilings. They apparently also began a shuttering plan for both plants. In 2019,

I met with leadership at Raven Power and they proposed to sunset both plants before 2028, but switching from coal to oil by 2025 to reduce emissions. Unfortunately, everything changed during the pandemic that occurred shortly thereafter. While a few boilers in the Wagner plant use oil and natural gas, one still uses coal and all burners in the larger Brandon Shores plant still use coal.

In 2022, unbeknownst to our communities, the Secretary of MDE, Ben Grumbles, applied to the EPA to decommission the SO2 monitor that we had worked so hard for, and the EPA approved for an unknown reason - perhaps because MDE had built an antiquated monitor that was not considered standard by the EPA - as described in their report.<sup>1</sup> Shortly thereafter, the EPA created a report citing that the SO2 monitor wasn't up to standard, had generated a few spurious readings, and had not been run long enough to use in determining SO2 attainment levels for the area. So, MDE spent hundreds of thousands of dollars for an inferior monitor that they didn't calibrate and maintain and removed before the EPA and stakeholders could use its data to determine the SO2 impact in our area. And, because it was removed, we'll never know what levels of SO2 we have been exposed to. The EPA went on to declare that the Baltimore area was "attempting" to reach a SO2 attainment zone without the data from the monitor from planning documents and interpolative "modeling", not monitoring.<sup>2</sup> What we do absolutely know in our community and in talking with Pasadena communities miles away is that we frequently have coal dust and ash on our homes and patio furniture and boats. And we know that we have been exposed to some level of SO2 and NO2 and particulates and unsafe levels of Benzo(a)pyrene.

Raven Power brought in a company to propose building a battery storage facility on the power plant grounds to provide the resiliency that was needed so that the plants could be shuttered. Unfortunately, that fell through when equipment prices that were needed suffered from sudden inflation during the pandemic and the battery storage company pulled out citing that the station was no longer economical to build.

We are now left with a battle between climate-focused nonprofits, electrification stakeholders, and the state aggressively promoting steeply increasing electrification and the PJM grid operator sharply opposing the shuttering of these two polluters because of grid sufficiency and resiliency needs. Without mitigation or a plan forward, this means that these terrible polluters will remain open indefinitely - essentially moving the problem from the state's tailpipe to our communities' lungs. Our Zip Code of 21226 is already known as one of the most toxic Zip Codes in the country and contains many polluters, toxic dumps, and even a radioactive Superfund site. Our air and waterways know no geopolitical boundaries, so the pollution put into the Patapsco waterways and into the air we breath also spreads to our neighbors in Pasadena, Glen Burnie, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and beyond.

**The Wagner and Brandon Shores Power Generation Stations are a black eye on the state's green energy plan and a continuing environmental injustice to nearby communities. We must find a way to balance grid resiliency with public health and environmental justice. All**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/08/19/2022-17341/air-plan-approval-maryland-clean-data-determination-and-approval-of-select-attainment-plan-elements> (P 51009)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/08/19/2022-17341/air-plan-approval-maryland-clean-data-determination-and-approval-of-select-attainment-plan-elements> (P 51010 - 51013)

**stakeholders must work together towards an expedient and achievable plan with specific actionable milestones that they are held accountable to. The intermediate solution proposed in this legislation provides a way forward. However, it's important to area residents that a new battery storage facility isn't built on highly polluted grounds. So, we would ask that the site for the facility be cleaned up before a new facility is built there. And hopefully, soon, the state and plant owners will remove the Wagner and Brand Shore power plants from our community, clean up their polluted grounds, and replace them with something with a light environmental footprint and conservation space - to restore its watershed and our airshed.**

**I strongly Support House Bill 1112 with modifications to environmentally clean up the site for the building of the new battery storage facility.**

Sincerely,



John S. Garofolo  
Stoney Beach, Curtis Bay, MD