



Testimony Opposing SB480 – Department of General Services - Clean Energy Procurement Program - Establishment

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 20, 2025

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Environment, Energy and Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing us to submit testimony in opposition to SB480 today. Concerned Citizens Against Industrial CAFOs (CCAIC) and other environmental advocates strongly oppose SB480 due to its harmful environmental impacts, the misallocation of taxpayer funds, and its misalignment with Maryland's clean energy and climate goals.

SB480 aims to expand and promote industrial-scale anaerobic digestion (AD) and biogas projects across the state, an approach that has already been shown to be financially and environmentally unsustainable. Similar legislation has been introduced in previous years and faced strong opposition from diverse environmental and community stakeholders. Despite this, SB480 has returned with language that prioritizes industry profits over public and environmental welfare, fast-tracking biogas projects without sufficient regulatory scrutiny or independent oversight.

The False Promise of Biogas: Biogas is being marketed as a clean and renewable energy source, but the reality is far different. Industrial anaerobic digesters do not eliminate waste; they merely alter its form. The digestion process leaves behind a concentrated byproduct called digestate, which retains the same nutrient pollution risks—particularly phosphorus and nitrogen—that contribute to the degradation of Maryland's waterways, including the Chesapeake Bay. Additionally, biogas production releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and is often tied to fossil fuel infrastructure through pipelines like the DelMar Pathways project, further entrenching our dependence on nonrenewable energy sources.

A Financially Wasteful and Environmentally Harmful Investment: Maryland taxpayers have already invested millions in anaerobic digestion projects that have failed to prove financial viability without massive state and federal subsidies. The University of Maryland has received substantial funding for pilot programs on the Eastern Shore, yet these projects have not demonstrated meaningful progress toward sustainable waste management. The financial feasibility study conducted by the University of Maryland found that anaerobic digesters are not economically viable without continuous and excessive public funding. Rather than diverting resources toward these costly and ineffective solutions, Maryland should prioritize truly clean energy alternatives such as solar, wind, and energy efficiency programs.

Environmental and Public Health Concerns: The proposed expansion of anaerobic digestion through SB480 raises significant public health concerns. The bill lacks provisions to assess and mitigate the risks associated with the transport, processing, and deposition of waste. There is no mention of studying the presence of PFAS/PFOA contamination in digestate, even though these forever chemicals pose a significant threat to farmland, water supplies, and public health. Additionally, the emissions from anaerobic digesters—including ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and volatile organic compounds—can degrade air quality and disproportionately impact overburdened communities already suffering from industrial pollution.

Misguided Priorities and Industry Influence: SB480 is structured to benefit the biogas industry while sidelining critical environmental and community stakeholders. The bill language suggests a predetermined outcome favoring industrial-scale anaerobic digestion rather than an impartial assessment of its impacts. This approach disregards previous studies and recommendations that have pointed to the economic and environmental risks associated with large-scale digesters. Maryland should not be subsidizing a waste management scheme that exacerbates environmental justice issues and places additional burdens on rural and low-income communities.

For all these reasons, we strongly **oppose SB480** and urge the committee to reject this bill. Maryland must uphold its commitment to genuine clean energy solutions and responsible environmental stewardship, rather than investing in failed industry schemes that endanger our communities and natural resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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Monica Brooks, President Wicomico NAACP #7028B

Sources:

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