

Testimony of the Community of Curtis Bay Association
In Support of SB0010 - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources - Alterations
(Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025)
Before the Maryland General Assembly

To the Honorable Members of the Maryland General Assembly:

The Community of Curtis Bay Association strongly urges passage of SB0010, the Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2025, to correct a historic and devastating policy failure that has disproportionately harmed our community. For too long, Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) has misdirected public subsidies intended for clean energy into trash incineration—one of the most polluting and harmful forms of energy production. This policy has deepened environmental and health injustices in communities like Curtis Bay, which is ranked #1 in the state for environmental and health burdens due in part to the presence of two incinerators and a landfill where toxic incinerator ash is dumped.

These subsidies have directly led to harmful developments in our community. Less than a mile from our schools, a new incinerator was poised for construction, made possible by the state's misguided classification of trash burning as renewable energy. BUT FOR the relentless, five-year campaign waged by high school students and community members—who sacrificed their time, energy, and well-being—this incinerator would have been built, further poisoning our air and bodies.

The incinerator industry has spent untold amounts of money influencing public policy, including working against basic transparency. For years, they have secured exemptions from even having to report to the public on the quantities of toxic releases resulting from their operations. However, this is now changing. New regulatory efforts are beginning to shine a light on the extent to which these facilities are major sources of toxic releases to air, land, and water. See recent reporting from The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jan/09/epa-waste-toxic-air-emissions>) underscores how long-overdue transparency measures are more exposing the environmental and health consequences of incineration that residents across Maryland and beyond have presented for decades.

Many of the very officials in office when this policy was established have since expressed regret for the damage it caused. Former Baltimore City Sustainability Commission Chair Cheryl Casciani acknowledged:

“I wish the commission had taken a position” on the 2011 bill making waste-to-energy a renewable form of energy, “which I consider to be a very key decision that opened a door for this kind of thing, so I regret not being more active in Annapolis on that. We have found our sea legs on this stuff now, but on this one, we didn’t.” While there “is nothing in Baltimore’s sustainability plan to say the way to solve our issues is incineration,” she continues, “it does call for relying more on

renewable energy, and now it is considered part of that. We are very much leaning toward a more zero-waste strategy for the city, with a much more aggressive, progressive approach to waste management, which would make this moot because it would starve incinerators. But this bill changed the equation.”

The admission is clear: the 2011 decision to subsidize incineration was a mistake. And the consequences of that mistake have been borne disproportionately by the working-class Black and brown communities living near incinerators. These facilities emit lead, mercury, and dioxins—chemicals linked to cancer, respiratory illness, and developmental disorders in children. Curtis Bay residents have long suffered some of the highest rates of asthma and other pollution-related diseases in the state. Instead of investing in clean, sustainable energy, Maryland has propped up an industry that profits from poisoning our neighborhoods.

It is time to defund this failed experiment. We know what happens now when we give incinerators millions of dollars in subsidies - they burn more trash and make it harder for us to breathe. They also sue County governments when they dare to send less waste to be burned - as was the case when BRESKO sued Baltimore County for 32 million dollars in <https://www.wastedive.com/news/wheelabrator-baltimore-lawsuit-contract-dispute/552762/> .

SB0010 will ensure that Maryland’s renewable energy dollars go to truly clean sources like wind and solar, rather than to an industry that thrives on environmental injustice. We urge you to stand with the communities most impacted by these decisions and vote to pass SB0010.

Sincerely,
Community of Curtis Bay Association Board of Directors