

February 17, 2026

BILL:

TITLE:

POSITION:

COMMITTEE:

SPONSORS:

HEARING DATE: February 19, 2026

SB0373 (Cross-filed with HB0066)

Environment - Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative - Withdrawal (Restoring Energy Freedom Act))

UNFAVORABLE

Education, Energy, and Environment

Senators Hershey and West

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

I am happy to live in District 13 in Howard County, Maryland, and I am writing today **in opposition to** SB0373, the Energy Freedom Act.

This Act proposes withdrawing Maryland from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a multi-state cap-and-trade program for power plant emissions. It would require the Governor to remove the state from RGGI, eliminate associated carbon allowance definitions, and halt the deposit of RGGI proceeds into the Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund.

RGGI is a worthwhile and productive method of requiring power plants to pay for their emissions, which encourages them to seek non-polluting alternatives. This is important to limit damage from climate change, as well as improve the health of Marylanders who live near and downwind of combustion-based power plants. Much like it is reasonable and equitable for citizens to pay a fee to dump waste in our landfills and transfer stations, power plants should pay for the waste products that they dump into our atmosphere.

It is well-founded that power plant emissions contribute to climate change and its damaging effects throughout Maryland, and that power plant pollution contributes to poorer health outcomes for people who live near these power plants due to particulate matter and other air pollution. RGGI is a market-based means to cause power plants which produce emissions and pollution to pay for the waste that they produce and dump into our environment. Pulling Maryland out of RGGI would be costly to Maryland residents in terms of dollars and health, as well as increased climate change impacts. It also would amount to a taxpayer funded incentive to power plant owners to continue and perhaps expand their use of fossil fuels, which would be quite undesirable and wasteful.

Maryland residents want effective and fair climate policies and recognize we need a range of tools to tackle this broad, long-term problem. The RGGI cap and trade system is an effective means of helping mitigate climate change. Pulling our State out of RGGI would be ill-considered and against the best interests of Maryland residents.

I appreciate your time in reading my testimony and encourage a UNFAVORABLE REPORT on SB0373.

Respectfully,

Raymond J LeVesque

Howard County District 13 Resident and voter

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cc: Senator Guy Guzzone