



Legislation Text

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Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill **R** (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke and Councilmember Reisinger

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Request for State Action - Removing Financial Incentives for Trash Incineration

For the purpose of supporting changes to State law governing Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard ("RPS") that remove incentives for the incineration of trash under the RPS; supporting an increase in the amount of renewable electricity required under the RPS to 50% by 2030; supporting investing in clean-energy workforce development while targeting economically distressed parts of the State and individuals who have historically experienced barriers to employment; and supporting the availability of more funding for investment capital and loans to help minority, veteran, and woman-owned businesses grow within the clean energy economy.

Recitals

The Baltimore City Council supports the use of clean, renewable energy in Baltimore City and throughout Maryland. Climate change poses multiple threats to Maryland residents and to Baltimore residents in particular, including increased precipitation, more frequent and severe flooding, and rising summer temperatures that increase outdoor air pollution levels. Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard ("RPS") law is a tool intended to incentivize new and clean sources of renewable energy that reduce greenhouse gases and other hazardous air and water pollution. The RPS provides financial incentives to facilities that generate energy from sources that are defined within the RPS as renewable sources of energy. The RPS currently defines "waste-to-energy" and "refuse-derived-fuel" as renewable, but facilities that generate energy from these sources, which are essentially municipal trash or derived from it, are highly polluting.

The Wheelabrator Baltimore incinerator is the largest contributor to air pollution in the City of Baltimore. The Wheelabrator Baltimore incinerator was one of the top 3 polluting facilities in the State of Maryland for hazardous air pollutants in 2015 and 2016, as well as one of the top 6 polluting facilities for nitrogen oxides ("Nox"), a specific air pollutant, during those years. Nox contributes to the formation of ground-level ozone, and the Baltimore area does not meet federal air quality standards for ozone.

The Wheelabrator Baltimore incinerator is a huge polluter in Maryland but still receives RPS incentives. In 2015, the Wheelabrator Baltimore incinerator emitted roughly double the amount of greenhouse gases per unit of energy produced, on average, by each of the 7 coal plants located in Maryland. Fine particle air pollution from the Wheelabrator Baltimore incinerator causes over \$20 million in adverse health effects annually in the State of Maryland, according to a study commissioned by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The Wheelabrator

Baltimore incinerator has received over \$10 million RPS incentives since being classified as renewable energy, according to the Baltimore Sun.

Clean, renewable energy creates jobs in Maryland. The State has more than 218 solar companies and over 5,400 solar jobs. The wind industry has brought more than \$380 million in private investment into Maryland's economy, to date. These jobs in clean renewable energy lead to good-paying careers within these industries and across related economic sectors. Increasing the RPS to 50% renewable electricity, by 2030, would support new high-paying Maryland jobs, and increase GDP due to construction of new Maryland-based renewable energy infrastructure.

Certain communities, especially many low-income communities and communities of color, are overburdened by air and water pollution from energy generation and are underserved by the benefits of climate action. The Maryland Commission on Climate Change has recommended that Maryland's climate action policies should improve resilience in vulnerable communities, produce public health benefits, and produce economic benefits that are equitably distributed across Maryland's population. For these reasons, Maryland should enact policies that encourage the clean energy industry to grow while seeking to increase the diversity of business owners and employees benefitting from the industry.

The Maryland General Assembly, the Governor, and other relevant decision-makers should reverse course on any policies that treat energy generated by burning trash as renewable, clean, sustainable, and/or environmentally friendly. In particular, the Baltimore City Council supports the termination of any financial incentives under the Maryland RPS for "waste-to-energy" or "refuse-derived-fuel" as soon as possible, but no later than 2020. The Council also supports increasing Maryland's RPS law for electricity to 50% renewable electricity by 2030, investing in clean-energy workforce development while targeting economically distressed parts of the State and individuals who have historically experienced barriers to employment, and making more funding available for investment capital and loans to help minority, veteran, and woman-owned businesses enter and grow within the clean energy economy.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the City Council of Baltimore supports changes to State law governing Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard ("RPS") that remove incentives for the incineration of trash under the RPS; supports increasing the amount of renewable electricity required under the RPS to 50% by 2030; supports investing in clean-energy workforce development while targeting economically distressed parts of the State and individuals who have historically experienced barriers to employment; and supports the availability of more funding for investment capital and loans to help minority, veteran, and woman-owned businesses grow within the clean energy economy.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the 2019 Baltimore City Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly, the President of the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House Speaker, the Maryland Clean Energy Jobs Initiative, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.