

On Climate, Hogan Doesn't Really "CARES" Gov. Hogan's Energy Plan Amounts to False Advertising

CARES: Hogan's "Clean" Energy Plan That is Actually Very Dirty

In December, the Governor's Office put out a press release touting legislation from Governor Larry Hogan that would purportedly "set Maryland on a path to 100% clean electricity by 2040." With the Governor's CARES energy plan (HB363/SB265) now released, we know that was nothing short of false advertising. Here's what's really in it:

1. New Ratepayer-Supported Subsidies for Fracked Gas

The legislation creates a new Clean Energy Resource Credit for four types of in-state energy generation: fracked gas, biomass, new nuclear, and combined heat and power. The fracked gas and biomass components are only eligible if they utilize carbon capture and storage (CSS) – which the Hogan Administration now admits does not reliably exist.¹ The new nuclear component refers specifically to small modular reactors, another form of technology that Maryland Environment Secretary Ben Grumbles insists will not come online until after 2030.

That leaves combined heat and power (CHP). According to the U.S. Department of Energy, 85% of Maryland CHP facilities are run from fracked gas.² In other words, the new subsidies will go predominantly to dirty fracked gas electricity generation for at least the next decade.

2. No Increase in Wind or Solar

Stanford University professor Dr. Mark Jacobson has analyzed each state's ability to reach 100% clean electricity by 2050 and his assessment for Maryland includes the following resource mix: 65% wind and 32% solar. The other 3% is made up of very limited water-based energy, like hydroelectric and waste devices.³ But Gov. Hogan's energy plan completely ignores wind or solar. Instead, it adds existing hydroelectric to the list of generation eligible for existing energy subsidies, crowding out funding that could help new wind and solar come online. On the bright side, the governor's plan would remove dirty trash incineration and black liquor as eligible for subsidies.

3. No Economic Transformation for Workers or Under-Supported Communities

As we transition to a sustainable energy economy, we need to promote economic equality in the emerging clean energy sector. When the General Assembly passed the Clean Energy Jobs Act last year, it included \$15 million in funding for job training and to support small, minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses in the clean energy industry. The CARES proposal does nothing to build on these first steps to build a fairer energy economy.

The General Assembly should ignore the Governor's dirty "CARES" energy plan and continue with its plan to carry out a study — due in 2023 — of how best to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2040.

Carbon Capture is Tantamount to Cigarette Filters for Climate Pollution

In the 1950s, Big Tobacco companies attempted to reassure the public in response to new scientific reports that cigarettes were linked to lung cancer and other negative health impacts. They developed a new technological innovation that they claimed would protect smokers from illness: filters. According to Dr. Robert Proctor, a professor of the history of science at Stanford University who served as an expert witness against the tobacco industry, “Filters are the deadliest fraud in the history of human civilization. They are put on cigarettes to save on the cost of tobacco and to fool people. They don’t filter at all.”⁴

Fast forward to today, and a new industry has come under fire for its contributions to mass human hardship: the fossil fuel industry. Their 21st century response is strikingly similar to the 20th century move by Big Tobacco: carbon capture, a technological innovation that is essentially a giant filter for smokestacks instead of cigarettes.

In reality, neither coal nor natural gas with carbon capture is remotely close to zero carbon, according to Professor Jacobson. “The technology reduces just about 10.8 percent carbon equivalent emissions over a 20-year time frame and about 20 percent over a 100-year time frame. At the same time, it increases air pollution and land degradation compared with no carbon capture by up to 50 percent.”

Maryland officials agree that CCS is not currently a reliable innovation. On January 16, Maryland Environment Secretary Ben Grumbles told the House Transportation and Environment Subcommittee that his agency would not be banking on CCS for fracked gas until after 2030, and potentially after 2040 or 2050, continually referring to it as a “future” technology.⁶ Yet despite the extreme unreliability of this “future” technology, it somehow became the basis of the governor’s energy plan.

The General Assembly should ignore the Governor’s dirty “CARES” energy plan and continue with its plan to carry out a study of how best to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2040.

*Interested in working with CCAN Action Fund on strengthening climate policy in Maryland?
Contact our Maryland Director, Steven Hershkowitz: steven@chesapeakeclimate.org or (310) 941-7886.*

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