

Lou Mansolillo

From: Miguel Figueroa <miguelfig387@gmail.com>
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To: House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Subject: H. 5923 Written Testimony

Hello, my name is Miguel Figueroa. I am a student in East Greenwich, Rhode Island and I am writing to support H. 5923, to ban the construction of pyrolysis and other high-heat incineration facilities. I read the following testimony to the DEM at their public comment about the incinerator plant last month. I also sent it to the DEM. However, it is applicable to this bill, so I will be using it as my testimony here.

Hi, my name is Miguel Figueroa and I'm a student here in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. I wanted to comment on the proposed Sun Pacific Holdings incinerator that may or may not be built near the East Greenwich/West Warwick border. The project is the subject of a lot of frustration in my community, and I'm willing to bet my neighbors in West Warwick are experiencing the same thing. It seems that everyone who pays attention to local news is opposed to this building project for their own reasons. Though I'm pretty far left politically, I have found myself on the same side as even the most conservative people in my community in our apparently unanimous opposition to this construction project. But because I'm a Sunriser, I thought I'd take a different approach to this and give my environmentalist's take on why this project should not be approved.

First of all, Mr. Campanella (CEO of MedRecycler RI and Sun Pacific Holdings) and his attorney Representative Shekarchi will go on about the "green"ness of their pyrolysis method like they did when they first proposed the project in May of 2019. I would like to encourage the DEM to **ignore that noise**. The incinerator, as I'm sure you're all aware, will produce what the company calls "synthesis gas." You may know it as biomethane. Its sister fuel, natural gas, is extracted with the same pyrolysis method and has an identical chemical composition. And like natural gas, when you burn biomethane, it produces energy at the cost of releasing greenhouse gases that trap heat in our atmosphere and accelerate global warming. In other words, biomethane is *not clean*. And pyrolysis isn't clean either. Do not let them tell you that it is. Now, I will admit, the human organs, animal body parts, and used hospital supplies that Mr. Campanella's subsidiary wants the state's permission to burn are not *technically* fossils yet. So biomethane isn't *technically* considered a fossil fuel yet. Ya got me. But that doesn't make the process green by any means.

Secondly, I know that Rep. Shekarchi has clarified that the entire incinerator plant will be a closed system, and that no gas will escape. In his words, this makes the project "green." Now, there's probably a natural gas line explosion on a Native American reservation for every word of that sentence. And I'm sure that all of those fossil fuel companies gave the same kind of assurance to the communities they later poisoned. But I'm not indigenous, so I'm not *even* gonna get into that. Representative Shekarchi, DEM members, *I don't care* what MedRecycler RI is doing with the biomethane. My concern is what will happen to the biomethane when MedRecycler RI harvests it and sells it to energy companies to be burned as a fuel source. And I would like to remind the DEM and anyone else listening that these are the same energy companies that have donated more than \$12,000 to Rep. Shekarchi's reelection campaigns, according to Follow The Money. In fact, Rep. Shekarchi has made *six times* more in campaign contributions than the next highest-fundraising candidate. Now, the Union of Concerned Scientists published a paper in 2013 that stated that medical recyclers like the one proposed for West Warwick would only produce enough energy to cover **3%** of California's natural gas use, even if they burned *all of the state's hospital trash*. Assuming Rhode Island and California have at least similar natural gas consumption rates, there is no practical reason to harvest biomethane as a fuel source, unless it is making you, personally, a lot of money.

That brings me to my last point. Killing the planet is a lucrative industry. But take it from Chevron, at some point people are going to start getting frustrated when you dump 600 gallons of oil directly into San Francisco Bay. Mr. Campanella is currently facing the ire of 1,000 angry suburban Karens and their Twitter leftist kids. And that's a crowd that tends to be difficult to bargain with. It's easy to fall into this trap of believing that Mr. Campanella and folks like him are evil and don't care about anything other than their bottom line. But I don't think Mr. Campanella is an evil person. He has some good points. He's right that landfills are gross. He's right that letting our trash gases float away into the atmosphere like some kind of collective fart is a bad way to go about our business. We shouldn't be dumping our garbage into landfills and ruining our environment like that. But here is where Mr. Campanella is wrong: the difference isn't between destroying our planet and destroying our planet lucratively. **We don't have to keep destroying our planet.** We don't have to keep burning natural materials to create fuel. We don't have to keep burning fossil fuels and pumping the toxins into black and brown communities. We can make ethical and sustainable infrastructure. As a Sunrise organizer, I spoke with Rhode Islanders of all ages, beliefs, and backgrounds who felt the same way that I do now. It's time for a Green New Deal in our state. It's time to completely reimagine our infrastructure so this doesn't have to be a problem in the future. Australia and the entire West Coast burned to the ground last year. Texas doesn't have power. Puerto Rico has been dealing with hurricane after hurricane and Rhode Island could be next at any moment. Things aren't going to get better. But if we adopt a new mindset, we can stop them from getting worse.

Sincerely,

Miguel Figueroa