

Comments RE:

**225 CMR 14--Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Class I (“RPS Class I”) and
225 CMR 15--Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Class II (“RPS Class II”)**

Dear Mr. Wassam;

I am writing to urge you to reject the proposed changes that would allow large biomass power operations to be eligible for renewable energy credits and “clean energy” subsidies.

Biomass is not clean energy. For two years in a row, the City of Springfield has been named by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation as the worst city in the USA for people living with asthma. We are located in a valley with two heavily traveled interstate highways, where air carrying emissions from coal and wood burning heat systems from the west sinks down from the hill towns and persists in our area, mixing with vehicle emissions and exacerbating respiratory disease. Biomass and wood smoke pollution is very high in particulate matter, as well as carbon monoxide, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and heavy metals from treated wood that burns. As a recent campaign against biomass reminds us, “We breathe what they burn”.

Springfield and Holyoke are poor communities with many people of color and Latino residents who suffer from significant health disparities, and the neighborhood where the biomass plant is proposed has many low-income residences and a school nearby. Our medical community and neighborhoods are working together to reduce the serious health impacts that already exist for children and adults with respiratory illness in our community. For 10 years, the people of Springfield have been working hard to prevent this plant from being sited here. We fear that the proposed incentives of energy credits and subsidies will make this site more lucrative and more likely to be built. Changing the standards to subsidize more biomass plants would be an unjust attack on our health and on our efforts to create a healthier community.

Finally, burning mature trees and wood waste does nothing to sequester carbon, which is what we really need to be doing to mitigate climate change. In Springfield and Longmeadow, we are planting more trees and adding solar panels to 55 homes through the Solarize program to create healthier communities. The Commonwealth should be offering energy incentives for planting trees and improving our soils for carbon sequestration, along with incentives for energy saving buildings and transportation systems. Together with truly renewable solar and wind energy incentives, they will result in greater energy savings on a massive scale compared to the proposed incentives for a few polluting biomass plants.

Thank you,

Cynthia Sommer
57 Farmington Avenue
Longmeadow MA 01106
casom@comcast.net