



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MA 02133-1054

**PAUL W. MARK**  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
2ND BERKSHIRE DISTRICT

CHAIR  
Committee on Redistricting

ROOM 160, STATE HOUSE  
TEL: (617) 722-2304

John Wassam  
Department of Energy Resources  
100 Cambridge Street  
Suite 1020  
Boston, Ma 02114

June 7, 2019

Re: Proposed RPS Class I and II Regulations

Dear Mr. Wassam,

I write to offer comments on the proposed RPS Class I & II regulations which would allow state renewable energy subsidies to plants that burn biomass and the proposed biomass power plant in Springfield. While the proposed plant is not in my district I wish to express my fervent concern for the shared effects of biomass throughout the Commonwealth. While the placement of a plant in Springfield would lead to disproportionate effects on a minority population, we must have a shared stake in eliminating biomass emissions. Biomass plants are not carbon neutral and will definitively contribute to air pollution in the region.

Forest biomass energy has been viewed as a carbon neutral energy source because the carbon emitted by wood-burning energy facilities over time would re-captured by the re-growth of the harvested forest. However, a Manomet study commissioned by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources concluded forest biomass emits more greenhouse gases than fossil fuels per unit of energy produced. While re-growth of the harvested forest removes these excess emissions from the atmosphere, the dangerous impacts of climate change are too immediate to wait for forest re-growth to reduce the carbon debt produced by biomass.

The Commonwealth has always been in the forefront of renewable resources and clean energy. Currently, solar, wind, hydroelectric, geothermal, and landfill methane gas are also eligible for the subsidies now offered to biomass plants. The implementation of these clean energy sources instead of biomass would bring jobs to communities across the Commonwealth and reduce our carbon foot print without the health issues that come with biomass.

Springfield, an environmental justice community, has one of the highest asthma rates in the state; 21 percent of public school children are struggling with asthma. These proposed changes would promote more biomass burning and increase the amount the particulate matter Springfield residents would breathe

in. The building of burning plants disproportionately affects minority communities as they are often built in low-income neighborhoods.

Massachusetts should be leading the country in reducing our carbon emissions and protecting our most vulnerable citizens, not falling behind. I urge you to reconsider the proposed RPS Class I & II regulations.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Mark", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul W. Mark