



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
**THE GENERAL COURT**  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

**Testimony regarding proposed regulations weakening biomass standards  
of the Renewable Portfolio Standard**

Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Mindy Domb  
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We are here today because our planet is in crisis. Greenhouse gas emissions are causing temperatures to rise and Arctic sea ice to melt. Human activity is accelerating the extinction of nearly one million species.

Every day, our constituents urge us to be the strongest possible advocates for our planet. We have promised to work tirelessly to bring their bold visions for addressing climate change to Beacon Hill. And this is why we are here today to speak with you about not rolling back the regulations governing biomass in the Renewable Portfolio Standard.

The Renewable Portfolio Standard set forth by the Patrick Administration laid the foundation for Massachusetts' clean energy policy. The Massachusetts RPS was the first in the nation and the world to be based on a scientific study and that found that burning trees for energy increases greenhouse gas emissions. The RPS requires that a certain portion of Massachusetts' electricity come from clean energy sources, which increases every year. In 2018, Massachusetts lawmakers raised the rate of increase from 1% per year to 2% per year, starting in 2020.

The Baker Administration has proposed changes that would allow electricity retailers to meet the increasing renewable energy goals by purchasing energy from power plants not currently eligible for the RPS. We suggest that this is not what clean energy advocates and Massachusetts Legislature intended when they expanded the RPS—Massachusetts' primary clean energy program—last year.

Biomass is also a public health issue as it leads to increased particulate matter and increased respiratory disease. Springfield, the largest city in the I-91 corridor, has just been named by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America as the number one most challenging place to live with asthma in America in 2019. Biomass could potentially worsen this already serious condition even further.

In closing, we believe this proposal undermines Massachusetts' ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a time when the stakes could not be higher. Allowing large-scale biomass power plants to be eligible for renewable energy credits will increase the greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts, rather than help reduce them, while exacerbating health risks to the public.

Climate scientists warn us that to avoid catastrophic warming, we must cut greenhouse gas emissions in half in the next ten years and take CO<sub>2</sub> that has already been emitted out of the atmosphere. One way to do this is to restore and expand carbon sequestration in forests. Therefore, DOER's proposal heads us in the wrong direction. It incentivizes logging and burning trees for energy, which will increase CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and decrease carbon sequestration.

Massachusetts must be the best leader we can in advancing a clean energy future for this nation and the world.