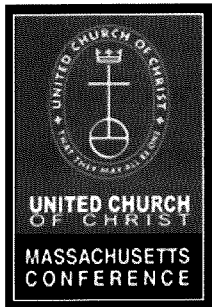




May 12, 2019

Testimony in opposition to DOER's proposed Woody Biomass changes to RPS Class I and Class II by The Environmental Ministries of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (MA UCC)



Who We Are: Rooted in the grace of God, the mission of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ is to nurture local church vitality and the covenant among our churches to make God's love and justice real.

As the largest Protestant denomination in Massachusetts (**370 churches and 70,000 members**), we are also the Commonwealth's oldest denomination, with roots going back to the Puritans and Pilgrims.

The Massachusetts UCC has a long history as champions of justice: from publishing the first anti-slavery tract to more recently passing the **first resolution on "Open and Affirming"** in 1984. In 2009 we became the first church-body in America to pass a **science-based resolution on climate change**.

Our Calling: In 2017 the UCC National Synod representing 5,100 churches and 1.1 million members passed a **Resolution of Witness** that declares

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S – NOT OURS TO WRECK

"God's great gift of Creation – the context in which all life seeks fulfillment – is in crisis. Driven by material aspiration, humanity's use of fossil fuel since the Industrial Revolution has broken Creation's balance. The scale of Creation's demise is dramatically expanding beyond our comprehension. Never has the earth and the climate changed so quickly. ... We view the current climate crisis as an opportunity for which the church was born."

Our Work and Our Voice: The MA UCC Environmental Ministries is a faith-based response to the climate crisis. We seek to protect God's Creation through education, advocacy and direct action.

We promote the UCC Creation Care Pledge, a faith-based rendition of the Environmental Voter Project. Voters pledge that, *"I pledge to be a consistent voter, and I will always prioritize caring for God's creation in how I vote"*. Those who pledge receive notices of upcoming elections and are reminded to vote.

We support congregations in becoming Green Congregations, a MA UCC program with 3 levels of achievement.

Our Ask: In proposing changes to the RPS that would facilitate and provide incentives for wood burning power plants the DOER has lost sight of its moral compass. Like the money changers in the temples of old, the DOER is catering to special interests. We feel certain that the DOER is fully aware of the myriad

and extensive harms that would result from burning wood for electricity and know that the proposed changes are a contradiction to the purpose of the Renewable Portfolio Standard.

Surely the DOER knows that we only have a dozen years to dramatically reduce CO2 emissions and that we cannot recapture increased emissions from burning wood in the time we have left to avoid the worst climate consequences.

Surely the DOER knows that removing biomass from the forests depletes the soil, necessary for regrowth.

Surely the DOER knows that science is clear that we must not only stop CO2 emissions but also sequester emissions already in the atmosphere and knows that our forests are currently the only effective means of doing this.

Surely the DOER knows that Massachusetts cities already have the highest asthma rates in the nation.

Surely the DOER knows that there would be a significant human toll and public health cost resulting from the increased asthma rates that would result.

Surely the DOER knows that the human toll and public health burden will largely fall on low income and disadvantaged communities.

We ask that the DOER take a deep breath, reflect on the harms they propose and remind themselves that with great power comes great responsibility, a responsibility to the common good, reset its moral compass and withdraw the proposed biomass changes to RPS eligibility.

Sincerely yours,

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