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June 5, 2019

Mr. Michael Judge,
Director, Renewable and Alternative Energy Division
Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 1020
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Director Judge,

I am writing you today in regards to the Department of Energy Resource's proposed regulation changes to the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard. The new regulations would have drastic effects on the city of Springfield and do not align with our communities' public health and environmental goals. These proposed changes have reignited a long debate in Springfield over biomass power plants.

Springfield's poor air quality has already led to extremely adverse health effects. For example, we have one of the highest rates of asthma in the country. Any regulation changes that will have an impact on our city's already dire air quality issues, which includes changes that seek to incentivize increased burning of biomass, need to be fully vetted by both public health experts and environmental scientists. Our city and its residents have the right to know just how costly biomass energy will be to our region. The state should also want to know how costly it will be before implementing these policy changes. I am concerned that DOER has hastily moved to implement these rules without taking the full public health costs into account.

Additionally, I want to echo the concerns from environmental advocates that increased biomass energy should not play a role in our state's plan to reduce our carbon footprint. Massachusetts has made incredible strides towards combatting climate and creating a carbon neutral economy. While biomass power plants may not emit as much carbon dioxide as coal power plants, it should not be considered a long term, carbon neutral solution. Changing our state's regulations to incentivize burning biomass will not suddenly make it a viable, carbon neutral energy source.

I look forward to your engagement on this issue and urge you to sincerely head the calls from advocates about what these proposed changes would spell for our region and the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James T. Welch", is written over the printed name.

James T. Welch
State Senator
Hampden District