

TO: Department of Energy Resources

ATTN.: Mr. John Wassam

FROM: Martha A. Nathan MD, Baystate Brightwood Health Clinic

DATE: June 5, 2019

SUBJECT: RPS Class 1 and Class 2 Regulations

I wish to submit this testimony in opposition to the proposed changes by the Department of Energy Resources to the Renewable Portfolio Standard regarding loosening standards for biomass and waste incineration to produce electricity.

I work at Baystate Brightwood Health Center, located in the North End of Springfield, the epicenter for the asthma epidemic plaguing Massachusetts. Springfield is the most challenging city in the country to live with asthma. I am a family physician who treats mainly low income, mainly Latino elderly, working adults and children, those most susceptible to the disease and to its morbidity and mortality. On any one day I am likely to see and treat a toddler or a frail older person who comes in wheezing and in respiratory distress. If necessary, I send them to the hospital emergency room for stabilization or admission. They and their families are usually frightened and exhausted from nights without sleep from coughing and shortness of breath. The asthma rubber hits the road at Brightwood.

I also treat migrants from Puerto Rico to Western Massachusetts spurred to leave their home because of climate change-induced Hurricane Maria, from which the island has still not recovered. We in the North End have scrambled to provide these "climate refugees" the support they need to survive, most of them having lost everything to the winds and the flooding.

Unfortunately, combustion of biomass and garbage contribute mightily to both problems: respiratory illness-inducing air pollution and the greenhouse gases that cause climate change with its massive hurricanes.

The new DOER regulations would subsidize inefficient wood-burning electric generating plants like Palmer "Renewable" Energy, making them viable. They would promote the burning of trees and garbage despite the fact that both produce more particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, and CO₂ than the oil and gas they are replacing, meaning that my patients will be breathing MORE of the substances that make them sick than ever and facing a worse future of climate change than if we kept on burning fossil fuels.

The irony is that they and all of us are paying for this. The funds for the renewable subsidies come from their energy bill, they who are disabled, underpaid and often desperately poor.

This is a TERRIBLE plan sacrificing my patients' health and all our climate future to subsidize the biomass industry. It is a violation of the public health and the DOER and Baker administration should be ashamed of their intentions. The proposed regulation changes regarding biomass and waste incineration should be withdrawn.