

Testimony of Revs. Fred Small and Leslie Sterling
Department of Energy Resources Hearing
Springfield, Massachusetts
June 5, 2019

I am the Reverend Fred Small, Minister for Climate Justice at Arlington Street Church in Boston.

And I am the Reverend Leslie Sterling, Rector of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Cambridge. I am a childhood sufferer of asthma and a lifelong activist for inclusive justice.

We both serve on the Steering Committee of the Faith Science Alliance for Climate Leadership, (<http://faithsciencealliance.org/>), supported by over six hundred scientists and faith leaders in Massachusetts.

The Faith Science Alliance opposes biomass incineration on the grounds of science, morality, and environmental justice. We urge rejection of any policy that would facilitate, credit, or subsidize it.

Every religious tradition forbids theft. Climate change is theft from our own children and the most vulnerable people on the planet—most of them poor and of color. Air pollution steals the breath of life from the innocent who are forced to inhale it.

Every religious tradition commands us to care for Creation. Climate change and the mass exploitation of forests for fuel desecrate Creation.

Every religious tradition calls us to care for the weak and helpless among us. Environmental injustice attacks the weak and helpless among us.

As a matter of science, biomass incineration accelerates global warming. It launches more carbon into the atmosphere now, when we can least afford it. It doesn't matter whether vegetation might or might not eventually grow to replace it, because by that time the climate may already be broken.

As a matter of morality and justice, biomass incineration once again burdens the least powerful of our neighbors with the toxins of inequality and racism. Springfield is already the asthma capital of the nation. To aggravate its pollution with more incineration is unconscionable.

“What will it profit you,” Jesus asked, “to gain the world if you lose your own soul?” If we privilege profit over human health, climate science, and God's creation, we lose both the world and our own soul. Let us make the scientific choice, the moral choice, the just choice, the compassionate choice, and say no to biomass.