



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 875

Electricity – Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Qualifying Biomass

Date: February 18, 2021

Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Economic Matters Committee

Contact: Doug Myers, Maryland Senior Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 875 which removes mill residue also known as “black liquor” from the list of qualifying biomass sources of energy in the State’s renewable energy portfolio.

The renewable energy portfolio should be reserved for clean energy that supports the State’s environmental assets like the Chesapeake Bay

Black liquor should no longer qualify as a biomass that may receive renewable energy credit. Black liquor is not clean energy – it is a waste product from pulp and paper mills that contains hundreds of chemical constituents. When black liquor is burned for energy, the process emits large amounts of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxides, all of which are potent greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gas emissions threaten the Chesapeake Bay through climate change and its effects.

Warmer waters exacerbate the Bay’s dead zones, stressing fish including the Bay’s iconic striped bass. The EPA predicts that a three-degree overall air temperature increase could increase the heat-related human death toll. Storm surges combined with higher sea levels and increasingly erratic storm activity may flood thousands of low-lying areas in Maryland, many of which are occupied by economically disadvantaged residents.

Removing black liquor biomass from the renewable energy portfolio preserves the integrity of the portfolio

HB 875 removes black liquor as a qualifying source recognizing the fact that even though the fuel source is renewable, it is not environmentally clean. While Maryland’s last pulping facility has now closed, the State’s Renewable Portfolio Standard currently allows Maryland to purchase renewable energy credits from facilities in any state within the Pennsylvania-New Jersey-Maryland Interconnection (PJM) grid. This has the effect of Maryland now subsidizing mills in other states to continue to burn black liquor and sell the electricity to Maryland through the grid. By ending the State’s ability to purchase credits from black liquor, this bill ends the subsidy for black liquor emissions throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on HB 875.

For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.