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Testimony in Support of
House Bill 875 - Electricity - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Qualifying Biomass
Economic Matters Committee
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The Rural Maryland Council supports with amendment House Bill 875- Electricity - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Qualifying Biomass and we encourage the Committee to support the Senate's posture on the companion bill, Senate Bill 65. Senate Bill 65 has been amended to only pertain to black liquor, or any product derived from black liquor from a qualifying biomass. Senate Bill 65 has passed the senate and is currently before the Committee.

Black liquor was a byproduct of the paper making process manufactured at the Luke Paper Mill in Western Maryland. In 2019, the paper mill closed and therefore is no longer producing this byproduct. Currently, qualifying black liquor only results in money being spent for renewable energy credits that are not going towards Maryland businesses. While the closure of the Luke Paper Mill eliminated the need for black liquor to be qualified as a biomass in the state, there is still a need for qualifying certain forest production residue as a biomass, as many forestry related businesses still benefit from the current forest production biomass qualifications. The cross-filed bill (SB65) has already passed in the Senate with amendment language that allows residual wood chips to remain as a qualified biomass but removes black liquor from qualifying biomass. The Council requests a favorable with amendment report of House Bill 875 be put in the same posture as Senate Bill 65.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

"A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland"