



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Mary Beth Tung, Director

TO: Members, Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Mary Beth Tung – Director, MEA
SUBJECT: SB0549 (HB682) - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Thermal Biomass Systems
DATE: February 23, 2021

MEA POSITION: FWA

MEA generally views the expansion of thermal biomass within the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) favorably. However, the bill excludes the use of biofuel from wastewater treatment plants; a technology that would be primed as an in-state clean resource if not for its exclusion.

MEA notes that the bill as amended would have a small-scale impact overall to RPS. In other words, this will not derail current technology-specific statutory goals. “There are currently no thermal biomass facilities in Maryland.”¹ In fact, “contributions from qualifying biomass sourced from agricultural crops, geothermal, other biomass liquid and gas, and solar thermal are too small to [register in comparison to other Tier 1 sources]”.²

The use of biomass as feedstock for onsite thermal generation is highly efficient. Pipeline-grade renewable natural gas (RNG) utilized to generate electricity for grid export results in a fuel use efficiency of approximately 33% when line losses from electricity transmission and distribution are taken into account³. This means that nearly two-thirds of the energy content of RNG utilized in this manner is wasted to the environment, versus the much more efficient option of successfully capturing and utilizing this renewable resource to offset onsite thermal demand.

The proposed amendment simply adds organic material from wastewater treatment plants to the list of eligible feedstock for a “thermal biomass system”.

For these reasons, MEA urges a **favorable report as amended** for Senate Bill 549.

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 2 in line 5 strike “OR”, and in line 6, after the semicolon, insert “**OR**

~~_____ (IV) ORGANIC MATERIALS RESULTING FROM WASTEWATER TREATMENT;~~”.

¹ PSC 2019 RPS Report.

² *Id.* at 14

³ <https://www.epa.gov/chp/chp-benefits>