



Testimony Opposing HB1085
House Economic Matters Committee
March 4, 2022

Position: OPPOSE

Position: UNFAVORABLE: (OPPOSE)

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility opposes HB1085, which would change the definition of “qualifying biomass” and “thermal biomass system” to include the burning of “silvicultural products” and “natural wood waste.” We oppose this bill because it will subsidize the burning of biofuels and wood that are major sources of air pollution from deadly fine particulate matter of 2.5 microns or less (PM2.5) and other pollutants. These could have significant negative health impacts.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) is statewide evidenced-based, organization of over 900 physicians, other health professionals and supporters, that addresses the existential public health threats: nuclear weapons, the climate crisis and the issues of pollution and toxics’ effect on health as seen through the intersectional lens of environmental, social and racial justice. As an organization founded by physicians, we understand that prevention is far superior to treatment in reducing costs; death, illness, injury, and suffering

A recent study from Harvard School of Public Health that looked at PM2.5 emissions from stationary sources of air pollution found that there is increasing PM2.5 air pollution when wood and biomass is used as the source of fuel which has significant health impacts. In 2017, the health impacts of biomass and wood combustion from PM2.5 from stationary sources in the United States were higher than from combustion of coal and gas taken individually. Industrial boilers had the highest emissions and health impacts, followed by residential buildings, electricity, and then commercial buildings.¹ PM2.5 exposures are associated with increased all-cause mortality and increased mortality from ischemic heart disease, stroke, COPD, lung cancer, and lower respiratory infections although other causes may also

¹ <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/abe74c>

be related to increased mortality from PM2.5² Worldwide air pollution was estimated to cause 4.2 million premature deaths worldwide per year in 2016 due to exposure to PM2.5, due to cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and cancers.³ Some studies have shown a relation between long term exposure to elevated pm2.5 levels, and hospitalization for COVID-19 in patients with underlying lung disease.⁴ Expanding the definition of qualifying biomass in the RPS would also put Maryland dollars behind pollution that harms local communities. Biomass facilities emit high levels of particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO2), lead, mercury, and other hazardous air pollutants than coal. We would never include burning coal in the Renewable Portfolio Standard, so we should not include burning silvicultural products and wood waste, either.

We must not substitute one deadly air pollutant for another when there are cleaner, safer alternatives to coal including wind, solar, geothermal and of course efficiency. We surely shouldn't be spending Marylanders' money to subsidize an energy source that could harm our health and waste ratepayers money when it is burned in the State and just wastes Marylander rate payers' money and harms other peoples' health when it is burned elsewhere. What it doesn't do is increase use of those sources of clean energy that reduce greenhouse gases **and** reduce air pollution at the same time. That is what a cleaned up RPS should do.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility opposes HB1085 because it would increase air pollution from PM2.5 and other pollutants which would have significant health impacts.

Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH
President Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
gdubois@jhsph.edu

² <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2755672>

³ [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-\(outdoor\)-air-quality-and-health](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health)

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7835077/>