



ASSOCIATION OF FOREST INDUSTRIES, INC.

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SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 1085

RENEWABLE ENERGY PORTFOLIO STANDARD – QUALIFYING BIOMASS & THERMAL BIOMASS SYSTEMS

March 4, 2022

The Maryland Forests Association and the Association of Forest Industries – Maryland’s two leading voices for the forest products industry, inclusive of landowners, sawmills, loggers, consultants, and primary/secondary manufacturers – support House Bill 1085 as recommended by the Task Force on the Economic Future of Western Maryland (January 6, 2022). The intent of the Act is to help promote thermal biomass energy which, as currently defined in the RPS statute, has not influenced a responsive market b/c of the restriction that a thermal biomass system be fueled “primarily” with “animal manure” instead of “qualifying biomass” as a stand-alone fuel source. Enactment creates an RPS economic level playing field consistent with and responsive to NR §5–102.

Sustainable managed forests are unrivaled in their capacity to remove harmful airborne particulate matter, and filter harmful runoff sediment and nutrients – P and N – from entering Maryland’s watershed. It is for this reason, et al, Maryland lawmakers enacted the nationally acclaimed **Sustainable Forestry Act of 2009**. This Act makes clear that not only is forestry Maryland’s preferred land use – nexus between healthy forests and watershed -- but that biomass energy development is critical to the State’s compliance with its green-energy-mandated-goals. Since enactment of “primarily” by the 2012 General Assembly, there have been no market responses for thermal biomass systems deemed ideal for schools, hospitals, and prisons. Deleting “primarily” from §7-701 will remove this market barrier. Ideally, the first benefactor will be a project in Western Maryland. Further evidence is reflected via DNR’s February 18, 2021, testimony on Senate Bill 549, aka, predecessor of House Bill 1085:

“Woody biomass is a preferable choice for renewable thermal energy because it is abundant, inexpensive, price stable, clean, sustainable, and locally-procured + low-cost energy source that is an economic alternative to high-cost and high-emission fossil fuels...unlike fossil fuels, wood represents a carbon-neutral source of energy...the department estimates 500,000 tons of wood residues are annually produced in Maryland (not utilized from routine activities and manufacturing, roadside and utility tree maintenance and timber harvest)...every 100,000 tons of wood residues used for energy creates 40 jobs...switching out just 20% of commercial/industrial fuel consumption from oil to wood would inject \$7 million annually into local economies, simultaneously preventing the export of \$14 million from our economy.”

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