



## **HB-1085 – Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Qualifying Biomass and Thermal 3 Biomass Systems**

### **Testimony before Economic Matters Committee**

**March 02, 2022**

**Position: Opposed**

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the committee, my name is Peter Alexander and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. IndivisibleHoCo is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today to **oppose HB1085.**

HB1085 relaxes the definition of “qualifying biomass” and “thermal biomass system”. This is a drastic move in the wrong direction for Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard, allowing more greenhouse-gas-emitting facilities to soak up Maryland’s renewable energy money just when we need to be putting it into emissions-free technologies to face the climate crisis.

**We need to invest in energy infrastructure that is truly emissions-free NOW.**

Burning trees generates more greenhouse gas emissions than allowing them to decompose naturally on the forest floor. Although trees can ultimately replace themselves does not mean burning them helps with greenhouse gas emissions in the short term. Newly planted trees have far less benefit to the climate and local air quality than a mature tree or a fully-functioning forest ecosystem. Burning trees releases CO<sub>2</sub> into the air immediately, and the carbon isn’t recaptured unless and until newly planted replacement trees grow to maturity over many decades.

Expanding the definition of qualifying biomass in the RPS puts Maryland dollars behind pollution that harms local communities. A recent Harvard School of Public Health Study found that biomass and wood have the fastest-growing share of early deaths in the major energy-consuming sectors; burning wood for electricity produces as much or more pollution than fossil fuels, including coal. When compared to coal-fired plants, biomass facilities emit higher levels of toxins including particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), lead, mercury, and other hazardous air pollutants are released in greater amounts Biomass facilities. We would never include burning coal in the Renewable Portfolio Standard, so we should not include burning silvicultural products and wood waste, either.

The Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Working Group of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change is currently conducting a study on woody biomass energy sources’ true greenhouse gas impacts. It is completed especially ill advised to pass this legislation before that study report is complete and has had a thorough review.

**We respectfully urge a vote in opposition to HB1085.**

Peter Alexander

Woodbine, MD