

**Testimony Opposing SB903**  
**Senate Finance Committee**  
**March 2, 2022**

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

As a resident of District 40 and a lifelong Maryland ratepayer, I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB903, which would loosen the definition of “qualifying biomass” and “thermal biomass system” to include the burning of “silvicultural products” and “natural wood waste.” 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.

Moreover, Local communities where trees are harvested to generate electricity are devastated: “I was covered in wood pellets while being interviewed in front of the plant. I became nauseous and my eyes and nose watered just standing at the fence alongside the plant where the residents live. (Ms. M) has to use two different inhalers and take breathing treatments. She has lost her two beloved dogs.”

- “The process is highly polluting, and a number of plants have been found to emit far more air pollution than their permits allow. The issue of siting polluting facilities in environmental justice communities is increasingly of concern to the Biden Administration.” - <https://environmentalpaper.org/2021/11/global-ngos-warn-cop26-that-burning-forest-wood-for-energy-sabotages-climate-action/>
- “The wood pellet industry, including UK based biomass giant Drax, is cutting through U.S. forests almost at the speed of wildfires and committing human rights violations by deliberately siting their toxic wood pellets plants in low-income communities of color.” - <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO2111/S00127/global-ngos-warn-cop26-that-burning-forest-wood-for-energy-sabotages-climate-action.htm>
- “the manufacturing of wood pellets pose significant dangers to human health from toxic levels of exposures to Particulate Matter (PM2.5), Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), Nitrogen Oxide (NOx), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Carbon Dioxide (CO2), methanol, formaldehyde, and noise pollution”- <https://naacp.org/resources/resolution-wood-pellets-opposition>
- “The pine pellet plant industry, and specifically Enviva, has a documented history of environmental violations and fines. they are known polluters and they are known to be environmental regulation violators. Undisputable fact.” - <https://www.wlox.com/app/2022/01/04/stone-county-residents-speak-out-against-proposed-enviva-plant-location/>
- “Air pollution from wood pellet plants comes from various sources. There’s the exhaust from a steady convoy of trucks. And, perhaps worst of all, the kiln that dries chipped trees to turn them into wood pellets, spewing loads of volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, that contribute to smog and ozone pollution; aggravate asthma and other lung conditions; cause cancer; and trigger itchy eyes and skin. In between, too, there are additional VOCs sent into the air when the hammermills shred trees and the pellets are fully processed. The wood pellet industry and regulators almost never account for that pollution in permitting.” - [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/biomass-energy-power-plants\\_n\\_61bcb6cae4b0a3722477d16a](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/biomass-energy-power-plants_n_61bcb6cae4b0a3722477d16a)
- “Emissions calculations showed the Amite facility was emitting three times more pollution than allowed by its permit. A third facility in Louisiana — also in a low-income area —

was also in violation.” - <https://southerlymag.org/2021/02/25/mississippi-biomass-facility-fined-for-emitting-three-times-more-air-pollution-than-permitted/>

- “Like (in) North Carolina, Enviva’s current permit proposal with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality is equally devoid of substantive controls to protect public health and preserve quality of life.” – Karen T. Egland, Chair, Environmental and Climate Justice Committee, NAACP National Board of Directors

Local communities where trees are burned to generate electricity are devastated:

- “The plant is a major emitter of carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, particulates, hazardous air pollutants, toxic air pollutants, and a range of other potentially dangerous emissions. When combined with other air sources in the area, Robeson County has some of the worst air impacts in the state. These emissions are direct causes of severe health issues.”
- “Burning these fuels (wood chips, poultry litter) is actually turning out to be dirtier than coal on a per-megawatt basis for most pollutants . . . The NCRP facility was (and still is) emitting pollutants at rates that exceeded the Clean Air Act’s major source threshold, but the facility never obtained the Title V major source permit necessary to protect air quality and public health . . . NCRP has Violated emission limits for fine particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides; Routinely failed to operate required monitoring technology; Improperly removed necessary air pollution control; Failed to conduct required emissions testing in a timely manner; Committed numerous other monitoring and recordkeeping violations . . . The facility underestimates emissions of hazardous air pollutants, which are those that Congress has listed as toxic and/or carcinogenic even in very small quantities. This means, the facility is evading even more stringent pollution control technology.”- Robeson County Cooperative for Sustainable Development, Lumber Riverkeeper, Waccamaw Riverkeeper, Winyah Rivers Alliance, Clean AIRE NC, Medical Advocates for Healthy Air, Dogwood Alliance, North Carolina Sierra Club, North Carolina Conservation Network, North Carolina Climate Solutions Coalition, Toxic Free North Carolina, Coastal Plain Conservation Group, Spruill Farm Conservation Project, the Rachel Carson Council, Partnership for Policy Integrity, Natural Resources Defense Council, Our Children’s Earth, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Integrity Project.

**Andrew Hinz**  
**1427 Park Avenue**  
**Baltimore, Maryland 21217**