



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy
In Support of H.3362/H.3333/S.2197: An Act furthering our commitment to non-carbon
emitting energy sources/An act to prevent biomass energy to protect the air we breathe
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These bills make a matter of law that biomass burning facilities, also called wood pellet burners and similar facilities, are not using a renewable energy resource and should not be able to claim renewable energy credits (REC) as a taxpayer subsidy. Wood is only a renewable resource on the scale of decades, longer than we probably have to mitigate global warming. Burning wood pellets and cleared brush is not part of sustainable forest practices nor an environmentally friendly one. Wood-burning power plants emit around 50% more carbon dioxide (CO₂) per megawatt-hour (MWh) than comparably sized coal plants, and 250 – 350% the CO₂ of a comparably-sized natural gas plant.

In addition to the CO₂ pollution, levels of other pollutants generated by these plants are such that smokestacks have to be tens of stories tall in order to sufficiently dilute the contaminants and protect the nearby area. The 33 solar panels on my roof cause no pollution, nor do wind turbines, the devices for which these RECs were enacted. The same cannot be said of wood burners. The materials purchased to burn are laden with toxic contaminants, whether that is from the chemicals sprayed under high tension lines or the arsenic present along railroad rights of way. Further, when materials are allowed to break down *in situ* instead of being burned, release of CO₂ into the atmosphere is over a period of years, not all at once at a time when we are already near an environmental tipping point.

The “solution to pollution is dilution” is an old industry moniker which we must not mistake for sound policy. H.3362 further stipulates that any such facility cannot be within 5 miles of a defined environmental justice population. It is important to prevent the further degradation of these communities which are already suffering.

The Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) regulations currently do not allow these plants to qualify for RECs, but that can be changed at any time, with at least tacit support of the Governor. The industry has lobbied extensively to gut all the restrictions so that the industry can collect taxpayer-funded RECs. Most such plants are only economically viable if they can get RECs, so disqualifying them essentially prevents the construction. Legislation is required to accomplish this. Depending on current regulations is inadequate protection.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has over 3000 members in 47 local leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires working to effect change on a wide range of issues, including natural resources and the environment. Since 1986, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has supported the policy that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.



We urge the committee to report these bills favorably.

Thank you for your consideration.