

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
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**ZERO WASTE CAUCUS**

Patrick Woodcock, Commissioner  
Department of Energy Resources  
March 5, 2021

Dear Commissioner Woodcock,

We write as the House and Senate chairs of the Zero Waste Caucus to express our deep concern about the Department's proposal to broadly expand the Renewable Portfolio Standard to include woody biomass, particularly in light of the long-delayed proposed installation of the Palmer biomass plant in Springfield. The mission of the Zero Waste Caucus is to work together to reduce and eliminate solid waste in Massachusetts through legislative action, state and local collaboration, information gathering, education, and public outreach. Our membership is particularly concerned with incineration and disposal of materials in ways that exacerbate environmental injustice.

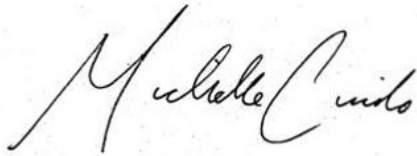
First proposed in 2008, the Palmer plant has been vehemently opposed by the local community and environmental activists. If built, it would be the state's only large-scale biomass plant, and it would burn more than 1,000 tons of wood each day in a city that already has an astronomically high asthma rate and whose population is mostly people of color. It would be a dirty, carbon-emitting plant and an insult to environmental justice.

The purpose of the renewable portfolio standard is to help the Commonwealth reduce our carbon emission footprint, not increase it. The academic literature on the significant emissions from a plant like Palmer seem clear from our perspective, and while we have read the developer's argument that he is in fact doing the environment a favor, it is difficult for us to consider his viewpoint favorably when it is held up against the lengthy list of credible citations on page 4 of the Attorney General's December 23<sup>rd</sup> letter to the Joint Committee on

Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy. One highlight – “biomass power plants...emit more CO2 than fossil fuel plants...emissions from bioenergy can exceed emissions from fossil fuels for decades”.

In furtherance of our mission, we agree with the Attorney General, and the many advocates in Springfield and around the state, who find the emissions of woody biomass electric generation will harm the public health and safety. Surely, we can find better use for hard-earned ratepayer dollars than to subsidize an electric generating technology that aspires to be as clean as coal. We urge you to scrap this ill-conceived regulatory change.

Sincerely



Michelle Ciccolo



Jason M. Lewis

CC:

The Honorable Michael J. Barrett, Senate Chair  
Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

The Honorable Jeffrey N. Roy, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy