SPEAK OUT AGAINST GOVERNOR BAKER'S PROPOSALS TO PROMOTE DIRTY ENERGY IN MASSACHUSETTS!

Final DOER Public Hearing on RPS Rule Change Scheduled for
SPRINGFIELD, Wednesday, June 5

HEARING: **6:30 – 8:30 PM, John J. Duggan Academy Auditorium, 1015 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA**

RALLY: **5:45 – 6:15 pm, outside the DOER hearing**

Stand in solidarity with Arise for Social Justice and other Springfield groups at a rally before the public hearing with a message to DOER and Governor Baker: **Don't Pay Polluters - We BREATHE What They BURN!**

WHAT IS HAPPENING: The MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER) has proposed sweeping changes to the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard that would:

- open the door for large-scale biomass power plants to be eligible for renewable energy credits – **starting with the proposed 35 MW Palmer Renewable Energy (PRE) biomass power plant to be built in East Springfield**
- significantly increase clean energy subsidies for polluting biomass power plants and garbage incinerators
- increase, not reduce, greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts

We need people to show up at DOER's public hearings and speak out against DOER's proposals to promote dirty energy in the RPS!

BACKGROUND: Massachusetts' Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) requires a certain percentage of the state's electricity to come from renewable energy. In 2018, Massachusetts passed a law to double the minimum percentage growth rate of renewable energy from 1% per year to 2% per year starting in 2020. DOER must update its RPS regulations to reflect this change. However, the Baker Administration's proposed changes would allow electricity retailers to meet the increased renewable energy goals by purchasing energy from polluting power plants that currently are not eligible for the RPS. This is NOT what clean energy advocates and Massachusetts Legislature intended when they expanded the RPS last year!

Please see the talking points on the following pages! Remember you will only have three minutes to speak, and DOER would like a written copy of your statement. You can also submit longer written comments (no limit), up until the June 7th deadline. More background, and a petition are available at bit.ly/PFPIpetition.

BAKER'S PROPOSAL REPRESENTS A BETRAYAL OF PROMISES MADE TO THE PEOPLE OF MASSACHUSETTS AND THE WORLD

1) BIOMASS BETRAYAL: Governor Baker is walking away from a commitment made by the Patrick Administration to communities in western Massachusetts to develop criteria for biomass RPS eligibility based on science. As a result, MA has the only regulations in the nation that consider greenhouse gas emissions as criteria for biomass eligibility, and only highly efficient biomass plants qualify. The proposed regulations roll back or eliminate all of these science-based standards, expand what types of wood can qualify, and will be a windfall for the biomass industry by subsidizing new and existing polluting biomass power plants in MA and New England.

2) CLEAN ENERGY BETRAYAL: Governor Baker's proposal would enable highly inefficient and polluting wood-burning power plants in Maine, New Hampshire, and elsewhere that previously weren't eligible for the MA RPS to receive Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) in Massachusetts. It would also allow the 35 MW PRE biomass power plant proposed in East Springfield to be built and collect $10-12 million a year in renewable energy subsidies – all while spewing out hazardous air pollution into an environmental justice community that already suffers from some of the highest asthma rates in the nation. In addition, Baker's proposal will significantly increase renewable energy subsidies to polluting garbage incinerators. This is a betrayal of the promise that the 2018 law expanding the RPS would lead to an increased investment of public funds to support clean renewable energy.

3) CLIMATE CHANGE BETRAYAL: Governor Baker has joined an alliance of U.S. governors that pledged to support the Paris Climate Change Agreement. But the proposed regulations take Massachusetts in the opposite direction. The Paris Agreement calls for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting forests as natural carbon sinks. Instead, DOER is proposing using MA's primary clean energy program to incentivize logging and encourage inefficient biomass power plants that release more CO_2 per unit of energy than coal-fired power plants. This proposal undermines MA's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as required by the Global Warming Solutions Act, and contradicts the public statements Governor Baker has made claiming to support the Paris Agreement.

TALKING POINTS ON BIOMASS FOR RPS HEARINGS

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) is proposing to substantially roll back hard-won 2012 environmental and health protections governing woody biomass in the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS).

- The 2012 Massachusetts RPS biomass rules were developed based on a scientific study of bioenergy carbon impacts (known as the "Manomet Study"), and were the first in the nation and the world to recognize that burning trees for energy increases greenhouse gas emissions.
- DOER is proposing to reduce or completely eliminate all the core requirements of the 2012 RPS rules.
- DOER is proposing to *eliminate* efficiency criteria for biomass power plants that burn broadly defined categories of "salvage" wood and residues. This will allow construction of massive electric-only plants, such as a proposed 35-megawatt biomass power plant in East Springfield, instead of the small, efficient combined heat and power (CHP) plants that were promoted under the 2012 rules.
- DOER is proposing to *extend* the timeframe for biomass facilities to show a net reduction in GHG emissions relative to fossil fueled plants from 20 years to 30 years -- when climate scientists are telling us we only have 10 years to slash GHG emissions in order to prevent catastrophic climate change.
- DOER is proposing to allow biomass power plants to burn a huge variety of woody fuels, including whole trees, that DOER is re-classifying as "residues" to allow calculation of a minimal carbon impact, even though the Manomet definition of residues was confined to tops and limbs from sawtimber harvesting
- DOER's calculations for determining the lifecycle CO_2 emissions from bioenergy ignores fossil fuels burned during harvesting, processing, and transport of biomass – even though such emissions can be considerable for certain fuels, especially wood pellets.
- DOER is proposing to treat liquid biofuels as having zero emissions, abandoning the MA protocol for counting CO2 emissions from these fuels.
- DOER has *eliminated* all the Massachusetts-specific forest harvesting criteria that were designed to protect forests, maintain soil fertility, and protect from overharvesting, and replaced them with vague and unenforceable forest industry language about "sustainable harvesting."

- DOER's proposal will enable the 35 megawatt Palmer Renewable Energy (PRE) biomass plant to be constructed in East Springfield, adding more pollution to an already overburdened environmental justice community. Arise for Social Justice and other Springfield groups have been fighting this project for more than a decade.

- If Palmer qualifies for the RPS, it can collect an estimated $10 million to $12 million per year in renewable energy credits from electricity ratepayers,

- Springfield was named "Asthma Capital" of the US in 2018 and 2019 by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America based on asthma prevalence, emergency room visits, and asthma-related deaths.

- The builders are promoting PRE as clean, green, renewable energy but there is NOTHING "green" about burning wood for energy. In fact, wood-fired power plants are even **more polluting than coal plants**. Per megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity generated, smokestack CO_2 emissions of a wood-burning power plant are about 150% those of a new coal plant, and about 350% those of a new combined cycle natural gas plant.

- Pollution coming out of the 275-foot high smokestack will include tons of fine particles (PM 2.5) which lodge deep in the lungs when inhaled, smog pollution, hazardous chemicals, and carbon dioxide, which contributes to global warming.

- In addition to the stack emissions, there will be noise, dust, and more pollution from the trucks hauling tons of woodchips to be burned and ash out to be disposed.

- Just like coal plants, biomass plants belch soot, smog, and other pollutants that threaten public health and the environment. Emissions from biomass power plants contribute to acute and chronic health problems including asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

- Climate scientists warn us that to avoid catastrophic warming, we must cut GHG emissions in half in the next ten years and take CO_2 that's already been emitted *out* of the atmosphere – most likely by restoring and expanding carbon sequestration in forests. DOER's proposal heads us in the wrong direction – it incentivizes logging and burning trees for energy, which will increase CO_2 emissions and decrease carbon sequestration.

SPEAK OUT!

Tell DOER to withdraw its changes to the biomass rules

Don't Pay Polluters - We BREATHE What They BURN!