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Comments before Senate Finance Cmte

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

**SB 168: Electricity – Renewable
Energy Portfolio Standard –
Qualifying Biomass**

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Good afternoon. My name is Mike Ewall, and I'm the founder and director of a national organization, Energy Justice Network. Energy Justice works at the local level with grassroots community groups in Maryland and the rest of the country to support efforts to promote zero waste, and to stop polluting and unnecessary energy and waste industry facilities, with a focus on ending waste incineration.

We strongly support this bill. The burning of toxic paper mill waste has been taking sucking the air out of the RPS since its inception. This decades-old practice was the only resource even used in the first two years of the Maryland RPS, and from 2004 through 2017, it remained the largest source of credits sold throughout that time. Only in 2018 did wind power catch up.

Maryland is unusual in giving renewable energy credits to filthy paper mills. In the entire PJM grid, nearly 60% of all black liquor credits came from Maryland ratepayers – subsidizing 12 paper mills in 8 states. In addition to the Luke Mill that used to operate in Maryland, we've been feeding money to similar polluters in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, Tennessee, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

These are no small polluters. In all of these places, the paper mills are one of the top air polluters in their county and state, according to EPA data. When Luke Mill was still operating, they were Maryland's #1 air polluter. According to data reported by the mill to EPA's National Emissions Inventory for 2017 (latest available data), out of 517 industrial air polluters in Maryland, the Luke Mill is responsible for a whopping 20% of the total pounds of health-damaging pollution. They were the #1 source in the state for Sulfur dioxide pollution from Maryland industries, responsible for a staggering 49%, causing respiratory diseases, breathing difficulty, and premature death. They were also the largest source of arsenic, and in EPA's previous emissions inventory (2014), they were #1 in toxic mercury emissions (27% of the total), and #1 in cancer-causing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon pollution (83% of the total). And this air pollution is even with the expensive upgrades they crowed about to the Baltimore Sun.

With Luke Mill now closed, all of this Maryland ratepayer money is going out-of-state. When the unions and Luke Mill protested this bill in the past, they made claims that these credits are crucial to keeping their jobs. Last year, we saw that lie in that. Roughly \$1 million/year in renewable energy subsidies wasn't enough to keep them open, anyway.

Black liquor needs to be removed. But that's just one piece of it. We still subsidize these same paper mills with their burning of other types of so-called "biomass," reported under a separate code in the GATS reporting system as WDS, for wood and wood-waste solids. There's nothing clean about burning biomass. It can be as dirty as coal, or dirtier on some pollutants. On global warming, it's 50% worse than coal. About 20% of the credits going to these out-of-state filthy paper mills is not for black liquor, but for other wood waste they also burn. The biomass carbon neutrality argument has been scientifically debunked repeatedly. It is not "carbon neutral," but is one of the leading sources of greenhouse gases. See www.energyjustice.net/biomass/climate for an overview of the science debunking biomass carbon neutrality.