

My name is Ann Bristow, and I live in Garrett County, close to the Allegany County line and among private and state forests under active management, including the land on which I live where we've planted over 12,000 trees beginning in the early 1990's, under DNR.

I urge a favorable report for HB0718 (SB0509) and in particular, oppose subsidies for wood or woody biomass for energy.

I listened to the Senate testimony for this bill and heard forest management practitioners and the timber industry speak about the removal of brush and small diameter trees to improve forest health, and incidentally, which could be combusted profitably.

The Allegany County commissioners stated in a February 22 letter opposing this bill that "From speaking with local foresters, it is clear that the closure of the Verso Paper Mill in Luke has spurred a dramatic decrease in the cultivation of low-value, small-diameter wood waste from logging and thinning."

Commissioners Oppose Reclaim Renewable Energy Act, [Teresa McMinn tmcminn@times-news.com](mailto:TeresaMcMinn@times-news.com) Feb 26, 2023

For over 30 years I've watched nearby timber operations and traveled the roads with logging trucks in route to Luke where the Verso paper mill operated until closure in 2019. I have not seen small diameter wood waste transported to Luke; instead, I've seen truck after truck of large diameter trees feeding that mill. Brush and small diameter woods have been pushed

over, run over, or scraped into piles and left on the ground. It is not profitable to gather up this “waste” wood, as industry refers to it, when there are plenty of harvestable large trees in Allegany and Garrett counties, unprotected by the 1991 Forest Conservation Act.

[Allegany and Garrett are exempt from the Forest Conservation Act because these counties have more than 200,000 acres of forest.]

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Documents/5yearFCAreview.pdf>

The Allegany County Commissioners also wrote that “woody biomass will play a key role in our region’s energy transition” and advocated that the AES Warrior Run power plant south of Cumberland transition from coal to woody biomass for production of electricity.

They would have our region transition from one highly polluting, greenhouse gas emitting facility to another, rather than seizing an opportunity to improve public health by reducing noxious combustion. Allegany County has the highest rate of cancers in Maryland and ranks in the top quarter (18th out of 24) of counties with highest incidence of cardiovascular disease. Both cancers and cardiovascular disease have established links with pollution.

<https://statecancerprofiles.cancer.gov/incidencerates/index.php?stateFIPS=24&areatype=county&cancer=001&race=00&sex=0&age=001&stage=999&year=0&type=incd&sortVariableName=rate&sortOrder=default&output=0#results>

<https://nccd.cdc.gov/DHDSAtlas/Reports.aspx>

To be clear, closure of AES Warrior Run should be coupled with a robust and just transition for current plant employees, and I have advocated for this elsewhere.

As Sonia Demiray has offered in testimony, woody biomass byproducts quickly become the product when you open the door to the woody biomass industry, especially by subsidizing them with renewable energy credits.

Since Allegany and Garrett County forests are excluded from the Forest Conservation Act, allowing subsidies for harvesting them for woody biomass would further erode their protection. In a time when Maryland is planting 5 million trees, why not work instead to provide incentives for maintaining mature forests with their amazing carbon storage capacities while also protecting public health?

Sincerely,

Ann R. Bristow, Ph.D.

92 Carey Run Road

Frostburg, MD 21532 (Garrett County resident)