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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Environment Committee  
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Testimony In Opposition to  
HB 5118 AAC The Reclassification Of Trash-to-energy Facilities As  
Class I Renewable Energy Sources

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Sierra Club-Connecticut Chapter. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Connecticut has assigned energy sources into 3 classes. Class I was reserved for energy from sources derived from concurrent solar energy, such as solar PV, wind, and some hydro. To encourage development of these sources, and to provide funding, Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) can be sold to those who must meet renewable energy requirements. Putting RECs derived from trash burning sources on the market will certainly diminish the value of RECs from genuine Class I sources, and seriously reduce the incentive to grow those sources.

HB 5118 would reassign to Class I an energy source which clearly does not belong there. The motivation for this bill is apparently a need to make trash to energy plants more economically attractive, to save the towns some money, and to ensure that trash from the state is no longer landfilled. These are, taken by themselves, laudable purposes.

However, Connecticut's Renewable Portfolio Standard was created to provide both incentives and mandates to move us towards truly renewable and harm-free energy: to wean us off fossil fuels, to minimize climate changing CO2 emissions, and, along the way, to enhance air quality by reducing the harmful and toxic by-products of dirty fuel burning.

To corrupt the RPS framework by assigning burning of dirty fuels a Class I designation is bad public policy because it dramatically undercuts our primary need to promote truly renewable energy sources. Yes, there will be an inexhaustible fuel supply of human generated trash, so it is, linguistically, a "renewable" source. But that is not relevant nor important to this discussion.

There is concern that Connecticut does not have a sufficient supply of energy from Class I sources to meet the future requirements of the RPS. However, New England as a whole certainly does. We may not be placing wind turbines in Long Island Sound here, but we will have access to offshore farms in neighboring states. We have ample opportunity for more solar PV. We are waiting on a DEEP policy on onshore wind turbines so that the Siting Council can start approving applications. While some have concerns about the appropriate Class for fuel cells, they are now considered Class I, and Connecticut of course is considered the fuel cell state.

I'm sure no one is proposing this change simply in order to be able to claim that we are closer to meeting our RPS goals. We're not that cynical.

So, in sum, this bill would substantially defeat the purpose of the state's RPS in order to achieve other goals. Desirable as those goals may be, weakening the core of the energy policy which must guide our future is simply not the way to get there.

Maryland has moved Trash to Energy Plants into Class (Tier) I. Accompanying my testimony is an October 2011 report from the Environmental Integrity Project entitled *Waste-To-Energy: Dirtying Maryland's Air by Seeking a Quick Fix on Renewable Energy* which explains why this was misguided and, on the whole, contrary to the public interest.

The Sierra Club joins with the Conservation Law Foundation in opposing HB 5118, and strongly recommends a vote against.