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Bipartisan Biomass Energy Amendment Offered to Preserve NH Jobs and Healthy Forests *Proposal Has Unanimous Support of Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee*

CONCORD— In an effort to avoid a crippling shutdown of New Hampshire’s biomass energy plants, while preserving ongoing efforts to manage our state’s forest land, a bipartisan coalition of State Senators will offer a proposal to avoid a protracted legal fight, which has followed passage of a biomass reform law late last year.

Senator Jeb Bradley, a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, will formally submit an amendment to HB 183 to preserve the state policy that was enacted last year in SB 365, which provides renewable energy, jobs and forest management through the biomass industry in our state. Senators Martha Fuller Clark (Chairwoman), Dan Feltes, Bob Giuda, and David Watters are co-sponsoring the proposal, which will support the enacted state policy to protect the biomass industry rather continue to wait for resolution in a legal fight waged by the law’s opponents.

“The biomass industry is at a crisis point, and these legal challenges are undermining jobs in the forest products industry and reliability in New Hampshire’s generation mix,” explained **Senator Jeb Bradley (R-Wolfeboro)**. “In 2018, the legislature passed SB 365 into law by overriding a gubernatorial veto with 2/3rd’s bipartisan support. Since passage last fall, the law’s implementation has been delayed by litigation at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and by challenges at the Public Utilities Commission. These delays prevent the plants from operating under the law’s benefits and, instead, force the plants into economic shutdown. The litigation efforts are causing major job losses and issues in our forest economy.”

The lawsuits threaten approximately a thousand jobs and an estimated \$254 million dollars of annual economic benefit to the State. Senators believe this amendment allows biomass plants to get back on-line, providing 100 megawatts of energy to the state’s grid, assisting the forestry industry with a low-grade market for wood chips, and putting people back to work.

“Consistent with recent case law, this amendment will create a “baseload renewable energy credit” to be sold to existing utilities, thus creating a mechanism that avoids the issues that gave rise to the ill-advised litigation,” explained **Senate Majority Leader Dan Feltes (D-Concord)**. “This is about standing up for the hard-working men and women of New Hampshire. We are focused on preserving jobs, protecting an annual economic benefit of \$254 million dollars, and maintaining sustainable forest management.”

“Lawmakers spoke clearly last year, the State supports biomass,” said **Senator Martha Fuller Clark (D-Portsmouth)**, Chairwoman of the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee. “We will move forward with this amendment to protect New Hampshire jobs and New Hampshire-based renewable energy.”

“Representing a rural district in the northern part of the State – this amendment is critical to my constituents,” said **Senator Bob Giuda (R-Warren)**. “This delay is unacceptable – we must act to protect the small businesses, landowners and the families that rely on the timber industry to survive.”

“Promoting ‘home-grown’ renewable energy policy is not a partisan issue. It serves the State by creating good jobs and benefitting our economy. The health of our forests is critical to our state in terms of the environment and our tourist economy. Biomass is an important tool for managing our forests that we cannot lose,” stated **Senator David Watters (D-Dover)**.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on the amendment on Tuesday, May 7th. A full Senate vote is anticipated by the middle of May. Senators hope for a quick resolution to this on-going dispute before permanent economic damage is done to the forestry industry.

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