



September 8, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 843 (Aguiar-Curry) – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I respectfully request your signature on Assembly Bill 843. AB 843, authored by Assembly Member Cecilia Aguilar-Curry, relates to bioenergy.

RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county. RCRC member counties host many biomass facilities and they play an integral role in reducing wildfire risk, improving forest health and local energy resiliency, and achieving the state's ambitious organic waste recycling requirements.

AB 843 allows local Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs) to access the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) BioMAT program. The BioMAT program requires investor-owned utilities to procure 250MW of energy from small-scale bioenergy projects, including from: wastewater treatment, municipal organic waste diversion, food processing, and co-digestion; dairy and agricultural operations; and, projects using byproducts of sustainable forest management. AB 843 does not change any of the procurement requirements, but simply allows CCAs to contract for bioenergy under the program.

When the BioMAT program was established, there was only a single CCA serving customers in California; however, CCAs have grown rapidly and 23 different CCAs now serve over 11 million customers throughout the state. CCAs were developed to procure electrical resources for the communities they serve. Many CCAs have expressed a strong interest in procuring bioenergy under the BioMAT program to help develop local projects that will reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health, improve local energy resiliency, or help meet the state's new organic waste procurement requirements.

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With respect to the role that bioenergy facilities play in wildfire risk reduction, RCRC agrees with the CPUC that new BioMAT facilities can “potentially offer communities a wood utilization option where forest treatment needs are high and where other post-thinning wood utilization options do not currently exist.”¹ We believe that the state should work to expand the use of biomass facilities and promote the development of newer, even more environmentally friendly biomass technologies. This aligns with California’s goal of focusing state investments in energy technology development and deployment “on the next generation of low-emission bioenergy technologies and construction of facilities located close to forest biomass sources.”²

Given the potential to develop bioenergy projects in areas with elevated risk of electrical deenergization, RCRC also believes that these resources may help improve local energy resiliency.

Finally, local governments are under substantial pressure to procure recycled organic materials as part of the state’s ambitious effort to divert 75 percent of organic waste from landfills by 2025. RCRC believes that bioenergy facilities play an important role in those efforts and will provide a much-needed alternative as the open burning of agricultural wastes is phased out. We believe allowing CCAs to participate in BioMAT would help achieve all these objectives.

For the above reasons, respectfully requests your signature on AB 843.

Sincerely,



MARY-ANN WARMERDAM
Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs

cc: The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Member of the State Assembly

¹ CPUC, *Bioenergy Market Adjusting Tariff (BioMAT) Program Review and Staff Proposal*, October 30, 2018, pages 9-10.

² *California Forest Carbon Plan*, page 130