



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

April 23, 2010

The Honorable Dee Freeman
Secretary
N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources
1601 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1601

Dear Secretary Freeman:

As the Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and as a North Carolina native, I am writing today to echo the concerns raised recently with your office by the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians (NCAFP) in their letter of April 19 (enclosed). The AAFP, representing over 94,700 family physicians and medical students, supports strong action to limit and correct the pollution of our land, atmosphere and water that threatens the health of our patients.

We believe that the proposed biomass burning facilities pose a serious risk to the health of patients. Current research, as cited in the NCAFP's letter, indicates that the burning of poultry litter and wood wastes, as would be done in the proposed facilities, leads to increased risk of premature death and serious chronic illnesses. The plants additionally will have a negative impact on the health of our patients through emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxides, arsenic, mercury and dioxins, all of which link directly to respiratory, brain, kidney, heart and thyroid diseases; cancer; diabetes mellitus; neurotoxicity; developmental delays in children and disruptions in fetal development. These emissions will have an adverse effect on the health of the most vulnerable North Carolinians: developing fetuses, newborns, children, those with chronic illness and the elderly. The result of bringing these biomass burning facilities online will be increased disability and disease, which will lead to increased medical costs.

A key reason for encouraging renewable energy through the North Carolina Clean Smokestack law was to provide cleaner air for its citizens. The evidence offered by the NCAFP indicates that the burning of poultry litter and wood waste does not comply with the spirit of that legislation. The AAFP requests that the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources consider the potentially harmful consequences to the health and well-being of the citizens of North Carolina—our patients—when contemplating the permitting of biomass burning plants in the state.

Sincerely,

Douglas E. Henley, MD, FAFPP
Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer

cc: Jeffrey P. Engle, MD, North Carolina State Health Director

Enclosure: North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians Letter of Concern Regarding Biomass Burning (April 19, 2010)