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A forest-protection group has called on Mohawk Trail Regional Schools Superintendent Michael Buoniconti to criticize the district's decision to install three 190,000 Btu/hr wood pellet-burning boilers at Sanderson Academy.

Beth Adams of Mass Forest Rescue, which calls itself "a collaborative campaign to protect and restore Massachusetts forests," called on the district and Sanderson to install several "high-quality fine particulate monitors; and that health effects will be monitored judiciously by qualified medical consultants."

The letter, signed by a Leverett resident on behalf of the organization, asks the superintendent to consider a thorough investigation that will "seek the feasibility of a clean energy alternative to this pellet boiler. Is it too late to ask for your money back, reinvesting it in truly clean, renewable energy efficient heating and cooling for your school buildings beginning with Sanderson Academy?"

Adams, who also held a vigil at Sanderson Wednesday morning, wrote in Wednesday's letter that the campaign is "astounded that you would agree to install a wood pellet boiler to replace an oil furnace at Sanderson Academy, when cleaner, healthier options are readily available" — and pointed to data showing that natural gas, propane and oil would be cleaner-burning than wood pellets.

Last year, Sanderson won a \$171,598 state grant to replace its oil heating system with wood pellets, similar grants awarded to Hawlemont Elementary School in Charlemont .

She attached a letter sent in March from American Lung Association of the Northeast's public policy director, Casey Harvell, to school districts asking officials to "the harmful health impacts for children and school staff."

In it, Harvell writes, "The Lung Association is concerned with negative health impacts from biomass emissions," adding, "We certainly do not support incentivizing biomass" as the Massachusetts grant program does. "The emissions from biomass include harmful particle pollution, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen oxide. While everyone is at risk from particle pollution, the youth, elderly, and those with pre-existing respiratory diseases like asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease are a greater risk."

