Public Hearing Testimony Speaker: Lisa Dondy

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WRITTEN COMMENTS OF THE CONNECTICUT CLEAN ENERGY FUND TO HOUSE BILL NO. 7346

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The Connecticut Clean Energy Fund ("CCEF"), administered by Connecticut Innovations, Inc., appreciates the opportunity to submit comments to House Bill No. 7346, An Act Concerning Green School Buildings And The Gross Earnings Tax On Diesel Fuel For School Buses. The bill, if enacted by the General Assembly, would increase by five percentage points the percentage determined for school building project grants for the construction of public school buildings that meet or exceed green building construction standards.

CCEF supports the intent of the bill. We believe this legislation demonstrates the Education Committee's strong support for green schools, which combine among other attributes, the best in energy efficiency measures with potential renewable energy deployment. It would provide an important addition to the policy framework needed to address the barriers to renewable energy development in the state.

Since 2000, over $7 billion has been invested in school construction and major renovation projects with the state contributing in excess of $4 billion. The Institute for Sustainable Energy ("ISE") estimates that total energy costs to Connecticut schools for the 2005 – 2006 school year have risen over 35 percent and now exceed $160 million dollars annually. Thus, it is vital to Connecticut's future that its schools be designed, constructed, and commissioned with high-energy performance and green standards.

The studies that CCEF has helped to fund show that high performance schools provide multiple benefits to the community, including:

- Saving taxpayers money - Significant life cycle cost savings are achieved through energy efficiency, decreased liability, building longevity, durability and reduced maintenance costs;
- Improving the health of students and teachers – Safer, more comfortable buildings with exceptional indoor air quality result in less sickness and fewer absences;
- Enhancing student performance – Use of natural daylighting and other high-performance features have been found to increase the learning rates for math and reading as compared to traditional classrooms;
- Protecting the environment – Energy conservation, improved land use and direct education about sustainability using the school as a "learning laboratory" will help

to preserve and protect the community's natural environment, which will also have positive impacts at the state, national and global levels.

Increasing the percentage points for project grants for construction of high performance schools will help to reduce several key barriers that have inhibited adoption of such standards. These obstacles include:

- Higher up-front costs - Although there is a perception that high performance schools are prohibitively expensive, national data shows that the average premium for LEED silver status is only 2%. Moreover, with early adoption of an integrated design process, these costs can be minimized or even eliminated;
- Fear of and resistance to change – By providing incentives to interested parties, the state can help to overcome skepticism that comes from unfamiliarity with new designs;
- Contract/bid issues – Additional funding will also serve to transition the historical decision making approach away from the lowest "first cost" focus to a more prudent lifecycle cost-based approach.

CCEF provides the following document references in support of the need for high performance standards for schools in Connecticut:

- *High Performance Schools Initiative – Final Report* (January 2006) by the Connecticut Green Building Council with funding from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund and the Henry P. Kendall Foundation; http://www.ctgbc.org/hps/docs/hpschools_finalreport_2006.pdf

- *Energy Efficiency Study of Connecticut Schools* (June 2006) by the Institute for Sustainable Energy with funding from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund through the Connecticut Green Building Council; http://www.easternct.edu/depts/sustainenergy/HPSchoolSummary/ee_study_ct_schools.pdf

- *Case Study: High Performance Schools in New Haven,* A Model Program for Green Building Renovation and Construction of Public Spaces. Please see attached.

- *Facilitating Renewable Distributed Generation In High Performance Schools In Connecticut* (2006), Opportunities And Strategies For the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund, Prepared for the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund by Peregrine Energy Group, Inc. – The document is available upon request.

- *Leading by Example: An Action Plan for Green Buildings in Massachusetts State Construction Projects* (October 2006) by the Massachusetts Sustainable Design Roundtable with funding from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative Renewable Energy Trust. http://www.mass.gov/envir/Sustainable/pdf/2006_ma_susdesign_roundtable.pdf

CCEF is in the process of developing a Green Schools/Green Buildings Program. CCEF expects this Program will fund the incremental costs of designing renewable energy features into green school and building projects and any incremental commissioning costs as well. Through this program, we hope to aggressively increase the adoption of renewables in new school buildings; helping to ensure a hedge against future energy price increases and a cleaner energy future for our children and grandchildren.