

Connecticut General Assembly – Energy and Technology Committee – Feb. 28, 2008
Testimony of Colin Carlson in Support of HB 5596 An Act Concerning the Right to Dry

My name is Colin Carlson, and I live at 640 Merrow Road, in Coventry. I am 11 years old and a senior at the Online High School of Stanford University, in California. I also run the Cool Coventry Club, a climate change organization in Coventry, and am on the steering committee of the Connecticut Youth Activist Network.

I believe that it is very important that all Connecticut citizens have the right to use clotheslines to dry their clothing and other fabrics. Using a clothesline saves energy and money, and keeps greenhouse gasses from clothes dryers out of the atmosphere. Using clotheslines also reduces stress on the energy grid during times of high use, thus reducing the risk of brown outs during the summer.

A large part of the Cool Coventry Club's mission is to educate people about what they can do to reduce their carbon footprint and to increase positive attitudes about energy conservation. As a student of psychology, I know that one of the best ways to encourage and maintain positive behavior change is to get people to see themselves as people who *care* about an issue and are *capable* of changing their own behavior. The best way to accomplish this is suggest actions to people that are simple, easy and inexpensive; once people find that they are capable of making small changes in their lives, they are much more open to making bigger, more impactful changes. The freedom to use clotheslines is therefore extremely important, because clothesline use allows people to feel that they are becoming part of the solution to our global climate crisis, and this makes them want to contribute even more. In 25 events that I have held around the state during the last year, I have encouraged people to pledge to make three changes in their energy use behaviors, and I can tell you that using a clothesline is one of the most popular pledge choices of the more than 900 people with whom I've spoken. Whereas many individuals are reluctant to engage in behavior such as carpooling, the people I've spoken with say that hanging their clothes to dry feels like a positive and fun thing they can do to help themselves and the planet. This is important, because once they are engaging in simple behaviors like using clotheslines, people are much more likely to start participating in more difficult actions like signing up for the Clean Energy Option or installing solar panels.

Hanging clothes to dry isn't just about drying clothes; it's about getting everyone to make a commitment to our planet. By enacting this bill, the legislature will cost the state of Connecticut absolutely nothing, while sending a message that our leaders care about conservation. This bill does not require anything of the state or of individuals – it simply ensures that people won't be prohibited from doing the right thing at their own homes. I truly hope that the legislature will “pledge” this simple, easy change by passing this bill, so that we all have the freedom to behave in a way that respects our environment. Thank you very much.