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Planning and Development Committee
March 2, 2008
Testimony of Martin Mador
In Favor of
HB 5798 An Act Establishing a Tax Credit for Green Buildings

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the Legislative and Political Chair of the Connecticut Sierra Club, and am here today representing our 10,000 Connecticut members concerned about the health of our environment. I possess a Master's of Environmental Management degree from Yale. I am a LEED accredited green building professional, and have conducted research in green buildings at Yale.

This bill would establish a program to grant credits toward income taxes for construction or renovation of buildings designed and built to green building standards.

The use of tax credits to encourage green building construction is highly appropriate. Green buildings confer a host of benefits to society as a whole. They minimize impacts on the site where they are built. They minimize water consumption, thereby protecting our sources of potable water. They promote stormwater infiltration, thereby reducing the need for expensive infrastructure, and reducing the erosion of receiving waterways. They reduce energy use dramatically, reducing the need for fuel delivery infrastructure. They reduce fossil use, so minimize release of air polutants and greenhouse gases. Use of daylighting and efficient luminaires reduces electrical consumption, reducing the need to build additional generation plants. They emphasize high indoor air quality, keeping the occupants healthier and more productive. The minimize generate of waste, reducing the need for landfill space. Each of these benefits has a direct public benefit, which far outweighs the cost of the tax credits contemplated in this bill.

The bill, however, needs revision. It needs to explicitly say in lines 18-23 that the credits are available only to buildings which have actually earned LEED certification at the Silver level or above. It must not say "or equivalent", as there is no existing equivalent standard which incorporates third party certification. Such certification is necessary to confirm that the building actually meets green standards as built. It must apply to the project as built, not as designed. The credit should be available only after certification has been granted.

Section (c)(1)(B) (lines 50-53) must be re-written so that it is clear that the building's energy consumption is no more than 79 or 86 percent of code. The current language actually says the consumption can be 79 or 86 percent greater than code.

The reference to transit-oriented development in lines 58-9 is unclear. While buildings sited near mass transit are preferred, this is not necessary for the benefits of green buildings to apply, so this clause should be eliminated. It could be that this language refers to LEED for Neighborhoods, rather than LEED for New Construction. Its should be eliminated from the bill.

Energy modelling should be added to the allowable costs list in lines 3-15.

The use of tax policy to encourage commercial construction of green buildings is highly appropriate public policy. Considerable societal benefits will accrue from passage of this bill. Sierra highly recommends passage.