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Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps, Program Director
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Energy & Technology Committee

Tuesday March 17, 2009

Written testimony regarding Raised Senate Bill 1131, An Act Concerning Renewable Energy
And Weatherization

Senator Fonfara, Representative Nardello, and members of the Committee:

Environment Connecticut submits this testimony commenting on provisions of SB 1131. While we support the clean energy goals of the legislation, we have some concerns regarding provisions of the bill.

The programs created in Section 1 of this bill appear to be similar to, and potentially duplicative the energy improvement districts statute enacted in PA 07-242. In addition, it appears that the legislation allows electric utilities to utilize funding from the CT Energy Efficiency Fund as well as the CT Clean Energy Fund to support the costs of implementing projects under this section. The utilities are then allowed to receive 100% of the costs of the projects, plus a guaranteed cost-of-service return on investment, back from the project recipients. In effect, *this language would allow the utilities to utilize ratepayer-supported Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency Funds to subsidize their profits from these programs.* Environment Connecticut strongly opposes this use of these ratepayer funds.

Environment Connecticut also opposes the language in Section 2 of the bill which allows the utilities to use ratepayer-supported Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency Funds to subsidize their profits from the programs created in this section.

Environment Connecticut supports efforts to create sustainable solar thermal incentives. Therefore, we are pleased to see efforts to address this issue in Section 4 of the bill. However, we note for the committee that the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund has developed a "pilot" solar thermal incentive program. Unfortunately, that program has not yet been implemented, possibly due to uncertainty regarding whether the state will "raid" the Clean Energy Fund revenue.

We also note for the committee's attention that HB 6635, An Act Concerning Solar Power which was heard by the committee on 3/10/2009 creates a comprehensive solar power incentive program serving Connecticut. However, that bill as currently drafted does not include a solar thermal component. We encourage the committee to consider incorporating solar thermal incentives into that legislation in order to create as comprehensive a solar power program as possible.

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