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Government Administration and Elections Committee  
March 16, 2009

Testimony of Molly McKay, Member of Executive Committee  
of the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club

In Opposition to  
Governor's Bill #839, Sec. 13, Section 22a-11  
Requiring that the Council on Environmental Quality be *within* the Department of  
Environmental Protection

I am Molly McKay, 8 Riverbend Dr., Mystic, CT. I am here today representing our 10,000 Connecticut members of the Sierra Club concerned about the health of our environment, our economic well-being, and the quality of life in Connecticut.

Please do not change the status of the Council on Environmental Quality as an independent, watchdog agency on environmental matters of our state.

This Council was created in 1971 to do three jobs:

1. Assess the condition of Connecticut's environment and report its findings annually to the Governor, and recommend actions to improve state environmental programs.
2. Advise other state agencies on the environmental impacts of proposed construction projects.
3. Investigate citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws.

This agency has proved its worth over and over again. The most outstanding example I can remember was its ongoing and unrelenting aid in the seven-year battle to prevent the development of an enormous jetport in Eastern Connecticut that would have literally wiped out four towns on the border of Rhode Island.

This battle was revived again in the late 1980's and early 90's when Bill Stanley reactivated his group of sponsors to try to get the jetport built.

CEQ must remain intact and independent. We citizens in the environmental community, both volunteer and staff of the various organizations, could not be as effective without the resources and help of CEQ.

Protecting the environment is now recognized by all as an economic necessity. Cleaning up the damage after it's done is far more costly than prevention. Here's a good example:

Acres of wetlands were filled in in the city of Norwich many years ago to build the Norwichtown Mall. What has happened as a result of heavy rainstorms? Two feet of water have flooded the doors of Caldor's and other retail outlets causing expensive damage. Finally the state had to intervene. Our tax dollars were used to buy up an entire neighborhood on the river a few blocks away so the state could build a dam on the Shetucket River to protect the commercial areas from flooding.

I can only imagine what was the cost of that project, which could have been prevented by choosing higher ground for a mall.

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