

Testimony of State Representative Susan Johnson, 49th House District, Windham, Connecticut

Good Afternoon Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Committee. Thank you so much for your interest in House Bill 5427, An Act Concerning Green Manufacturing Programs and the Production of Environmentally Preferred Products.

Connecticut has a long and rich history of fine educational institutions, great inventions and manufacturing industries. During the 1970s, we began to become painfully aware that we were going to struggle with the cost of energy. During the 1980s, we ended up losing much of our manufacturing base in this state, and all around the nation. To our great detriment, this created a perfect economic and environmental storm. In my own Windham/Willimantic community we have been losing our manufacturing tax base since the 1950s, starting with the decline of the once great American Thread. This has caused the Windham/Willimantic economy to deteriorate from a hub of economic activity to number 169 out of 169 towns in Connecticut in terms of our ability to pay for our basic educational and other necessary government services.

My Town of Windham and several other economically impacted urban areas of Connecticut are the home of universities, community colleges, and/or vocational technical schools which are ideal environments to promote and generate a new era in the development and manufacture of environmentally preferred products. Connecticut has the opportunity to take advantage of the synergy that is created by having educational institutions nearby each other. In my region, despite our economic woes, we are indeed fortunate to have Eastern Connecticut State University, the location of the Institute for Sustainable Energy. We also have Quinebaug Valley Community College, and the Windham Vocational Technical School in our Town of Windham. Of course, our next door neighbor is the University of Connecticut in the Town of Mansfield. The proximity of these institutions to one another should be the catalyst that will create a multitude and progression of opportunities for students in these fields; it should also provide the chance for Windham and other Connecticut towns to begin developing and manufacturing sustainable energy products for our new sustainable energy economy that is an absolute necessity in modern times.

Thank you.