



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Public Hearing – February 2, 2009
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Gina McCarthy
Department of Environmental Protection

Proposed House Bill No. 5474 - An Act Concerning Private, Municipal and State Recycling

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Proposed House Bill No. 5474 - AN ACT CONCERNING PRIVATE, MUNICIPAL AND STATE RECYCLING. We are supportive of efforts to encourage and promote recycling which is at the core of the State Solid Waste Management Plan as last revised in December of 2006. Accordingly we offer the following thoughts:

Proposed House Bill No. 5474 seeks to require the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection to expand beneficial uses of recyclable materials, develop a public education program to encourage recycling and add all types of plastics to the regulatory list of mandatory recyclables. The Department fully supports expanding beneficial reuse opportunities and we hope the Environment Committee will look favorably on our proposal entitled An Act Concerning Recycling, Beneficial Reuse and Dumping which addresses this issue.

Public education is clearly an important element to encouraging recycling efforts and the Department stands ready to provide such a program should funding be made available.

The Department is supportive of the concept of increasing certain types of plastics to be recycled such as #1 and #2 resins from food containers, and we recognize that in many communities such plastics are already being collected and recycled. We do not think it is feasible at this time to mandate "all plastics" such as toys, building materials or auto parts, as neither the infrastructure nor the markets exist that could reasonably support such a broad mandate. The Department has embarked on a waste characterization study to better understand where the best opportunities lie to advance and improve recycling. The outcome of this study may better inform which items are strong candidates to consider for mandatory recycling.

Proposed House Bill No. 5474 also seeks to require state agencies to develop sustainability plans, and to make various amendments to clarify the recycling mandate, establish penalties for mixing segregated recyclables with nonrecyclables, to increase fines for littering or not recycling and to establish a revolving loan to encourage curbside recycling. The Department supports the need to clarify and make the recycling mandate clear to every household, institution, town, agency and commercial business. This concept is also addressed in our proposal entitled An Act Concerning Recycling, Beneficial Reuse and Dumping.

Finally, the Department also supports efforts to improve the tools for achieving compliance with recycling laws such as civil penalties and increased fines, but the Department has questions about how a revolving loan fund might work, particularly how it would be funded and administered. The Department remains willing to work with the Committee on these issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact the Department's legislative liaison, Robert La France, at 424-3401.