



198 Park Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
West Hartford, CT 06119  
(860) 231-8842  
[www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org](http://www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org)

Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps  
Environment Connecticut Program Director

Before the Connecticut General Assembly Commerce Committee

Monday, February 22, 2010

**Opposing Raised House Bill 5208, An Act Concerning Expedited Permitting For Economic Development**

Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Environment Connecticut, I am submitting this testimony **Opposing Raised House Bill 5208**. This same bill was introduced in 2009 (HB 6586 of the 2009 session) and received a significant fiscal note due to the costs to implement the bill that would be imposed upon state agencies and municipalities.

To impose the costs associated with implementation of this bill on state agencies would place significant strains upon the Department of Environmental Protection as well as other agencies. This, at a time when they are already facing staffing shortages and cut backs which impede their ability to implement existing agency functions. We are concerned that adding additional significant burdens upon the DEP at this time would hinder its ability to effectively and efficiently carry out its work protecting our state's air, water and landscape.

Additionally, we have serious concerns about the substance of HB 5208. We support efforts to improve efficiency and collaboration between agencies in environmental permitting and other areas. However, we are concerned that this legislation may tend to create unintended outcomes whereby important environmental safeguards are bypassed in the name of "expediting" economic development projects. This would be a foolish, short-sighted course of action that could create significant long-term damage to Connecticut's clean water and other environmental protections.

We encourage the committee to reject this legislation. Instead, we urge the committee to work to bring all interested stakeholders together to discuss realistic, affordable steps that could be taken to achieve the underlying goal of this bill to remove unnecessary barriers to projects while retaining the integrity of the permitting processes intended to protect Connecticut's air, water and landscape

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps  
Program Director  
Environment Connecticut

*Environment Connecticut is a non-profit, member-supported environmental advocacy organization working for clean air, clean water and open spaces.*

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