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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Commerce Committee
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Testimony In Support of
HB 5435 AAC The Recommendations of the Majority Leader's Job Growth Roundtable

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Sierra Club Connecticut Chapter, and the Legislative Co-Chair of the Connecticut Foundation for Environmentally Safe Schools (ConnFESS). I am testifying here for both Sierra and ConnFESS. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

I will address my remarks to Section 10 of the bill. This section would make major upgrades of a school's mechanical plant (heating/ventilation/air conditioning or HVAC) eligible for state reimbursement, as long as the upgrades met the "green" requirements of section 16a-38k. However, the language of this section needs some revision so that its intent and effect is clear. It also needs to better clarify the energy standards to which the project must adhere. We will submit suggested revisions to address these two issues.

This bill will encourage districts which decline to replace a school entirely, or make comprehensive renovations, to at least upgrade the building's HVAC systems. These upgrades will significantly improve the energy performance of the building, resulting in considerable cost savings. If the ventilation system is upgraded, the increased airflow can significantly improve the Indoor Air Quality for occupants of the school. This construction work, of course, will create green jobs.

ConnFESS makes the following statement about these upgrades:

The good news is that over the last decade advancements in HVAC technology can make it easier to balance energy efficiency, optimal indoor air quality and cost savings. It is possible to have healthier people and a healthier planet without busting one's budget. The U.S. EPA's Design Tools for Schools (www.epa.gov/iaq/schooldesign/hvac.html) explains how engineers can design HVAC systems that:

1. are cost competitive with traditional ventilation designs
2. provide the appropriate quality and quantity of outdoor air
3. lower energy costs
4. simplify maintenance

As our state moves to decrease school construction grants due to more limited bonding and debt service capacity, we support legislation that will make smaller projects to upgrade and repair HVAC systems eligible for reimbursement because such allocations could:

1. Promote:
 - a. Job growth
 - b. Use of green technologies in schools

- c. Cost savings through energy efficiency
- d. Increased public awareness of the substantial role of HVAC systems in creating healthier, safer, and more productive learning environments
- e. Proven benefits of superior IAQ such as improved test scores, attendance, and teacher retention

2. Protect:

- a. The health of our students, teachers and staff from sick building syndrome and building related illnesses
- b. The considerable long-term local and state investments made in our school facilities
- c. The environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions

3. Prevent:

- a. Accelerated deterioration and reduced efficiency of a school's physical plant
- b. Negative publicity that damages a school's public image
- c. Strained relationships between parents, teachers, administration and school officials
- d. Liability issues and workers compensation claims
- e. Serious IAQ problems that could force the closing of a school