

# Mayor Finch's Testimony

## Re: HB 5362: An Act Concerning Renewable Energy

As mayor of Connecticut's largest city, I can say with certainty, that many of Connecticut's cities and towns are struggling to maintain our services while keeping the burden of taxes at bay. This is an ongoing struggle that doesn't go away each year. Instead, it seems to become more difficult as the years progress. One of the largest costs for any municipality is the cost of electricity. In Connecticut, where electricity costs are second only to Hawaii, this is especially true. The funds we allocate for electricity that powers our parks, schools, infrastructure and offices are funds not spent on teachers, roads and municipal improvements.

Many municipal leaders, including myself, have explored alternative energy options for city-owned properties as a possible solution to our high energy costs. Right now, in states like Massachusetts and New Jersey, municipalities regularly install solar equipment on office buildings, schools, landfills, Brownfield sites and other municipal-owned properties to produce their own energy. The net result for cities and towns in those states has been dramatically reduced energy bills. Connecticut needs to pass legislation that will create the incentive bedrock that supports these types of projects. While it may appear to be "An Act Concerning Renewable Energy", municipal leaders look at it as "An Act Concerning Municipal Budgets". I'm here today to support HB5362 because well designed, appropriately financed, and legislatively supported solar projects can positively impact municipal budgets.

The City of Bridgeport has explored the possibility of utilizing solar energy to save money, but in doing so realized that the upfront costs of solar exceed what our city is willing to spend on renewable energy for savings that lay in the distant future. But, as many municipal leaders in New Jersey and Massachusetts will tell you, a responsibly designed solar incentive program combined with the energy financing and construction expertise that can be found right here in our own state can result in utility savings that require no upfront cost with the results of immediate energy savings; energy savings that can help municipal leaders maintain services that our residents have come to rely on.

I thank this committee for bringing this issue to the spotlight and I ask that solar legislation be crafted to allow a robust solar industry similar to our neighbors in New Jersey and Massachusetts for Connecticut. Our citizens want to be part of the national shift towards renewable energy. Our cities want to be able to utilize solar as a mechanism to reduce expenditures. Now is the time for legislatures to act. Good luck in this important endeavor.