

Mr. and Madam Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Keith Klain and I live in Trumbull, Connecticut and I am here today to offer my support for bill number 461 AN ACT CONCERNING SITING COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS AND DECISIONS and respectfully request that you pass this bill to grant the Connecticut Siting Council the power it needs to ensure all appropriate actions have been taken for the safe siting and operation of power plants in the state of Connecticut.

At a recent hearing on the Kleen Energy plant explosion in Middletown, Connecticut it was learned that no government agency has authority to regulate safety issues at electrical power plants. The chairman of the Department of Public Utility Control was quoted as saying "there is frankly a lack of oversight, but there is a very extensive amount of local, state and federal entities that all have a piece."

But following a recent tour of the blast site, United States Senator, Christopher Dodd called for federal standards governing the construction of power plants, including standards on how gas lines at power plants are purged. At the time of its construction, the Kleen Energy Plant was considered a model of safety and innovation incorporating all local and federal guidelines for the building and operation of the plant.

In light of these facts and the events over the last several months, you could imagine the amazement when the day after the explosion in Middletown, six Trumbull residents received registered mail from DFC-ERG CT – a limited liability company set up by Danbury, Connecticut's FuelCell Energy – informing them of their intention to build a 3.4 megawatt power plant running on natural gas in the middle of their neighborhood. Less than 200 feet from the nearest homes.

The type of power plant FuelCell Energy is proposing to build uses the energy expended through the decompression of natural gas through a turbine which powers fuel cells. Adding to the tremendous risk of installing an electrical power plant on top of a 50 year old high pressure gas line in a residential neighborhood is the fact that since 1990, the United States Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration has recorded over 1200 serious and significant incidents specifically related to gas transmission causing fatalities, injury, fires and explosions. On average, over 50 percent of the causes of these incidents are unknown.

Through the process of navigating the misinformation and lack of public transparency surrounding FuelCell Energy's application and how it has come before the Siting Council we have learned many legislative and process changes that should be made to ensure the safe siting and operation of these types of power plants. The location of a power plant should be the first and foremost issue for public safety and currently the Siting Council is severely limited in its ability to deny applications based on anything other than environmental impact.

The first step towards aligning our needs for clean energy with public safety is granting the Siting Council the ability to take local municipal impact into consideration when granting applications which is what Bill number 461 AN ACT CONCERNING SITING COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS AND DECISIONS will do.

Recently Governor Jodi Rell announced she is assembling a panel of state agencies to identify the cause of the Kleen Energy power plant explosion including construction problems and licensing or permitting matters. I applaud Governor Rell and support her actions to understand what went wrong and how the Middletown tragedy could have been prevented.

Mr./Madam Chairman and members of the committee, you have the unique opportunity through this bill to take such a preventative measure. An opportunity to learn from a tragic event and make a change for the better. An opportunity that cannot be missed for the impact to future communities and the over 40 towns in Connecticut that have expressed support for Trumbull in our fight to stop power plants from being built in residential neighborhoods.

In closing, I again offer my support for bill number 461 AN ACT CONCERNING SITING COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS AND DECISIONS and respectfully request that you pass this bill to make certain that in the race for progress and clean energy we ensure the safety of our communities.

Thank you.