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## March 4, 2010 Energy and Technology Committee Hearing Testimony of Shirley Bergert<sup>1</sup>

### RB 5361: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MUNICIPAL AND STATE ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

**Recommended Action: Prior to adopting this proposal, the legislature should ensure that the utilities can cost-effectively provide adequate amounts of low cost capital, and that such capital will not reduce the funds currently available for conservation or result in increased rates for residential customers.**

This bill has the laudatory effect of proposing conservation improvements for municipal and state facilities. However, it appears to propose that CL&P and UI provide the capital for such programs. This raises serious questions:

- Connecticut has the highest electric rates in the continental US. The impact of this proposal on rates should be a consideration, particularly since electric bills are unaffordable to many low income households. Where will the capital come from? If provided by ratepayers, what impact will it have on rates? Will the impact be limited to municipal and state government ratepayers, or will it also impact residential consumers?
- Prior to adopting this proposal, the legislature should ensure that the utilities can cost-effectively provide adequate amounts of low cost capital, and that such capital will not reduce the funds currently available for conservation. The Energy Conservation Management Board has been diligently working with the utility conservation program administrators on developing financing to support expanded residential conservation. This is a complicated endeavor. The consensus of the experts involved in this process has been that the utilities would have great difficulty providing adequate low cost capital for a large residential financing program, although they provide capital for a small business program. In light of this, it may well be difficult to impossible for the utilities to provide capital for a large conservation program for municipal and state government facilities.

<sup>1</sup> Shirley Bergert serves: on the Low Income Energy Advisory Board (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16a-41b); as the residential representative on the Energy Conservation Management Board overseeing the expenditure of ratepayer conservation funds in Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16-245m); as the low income representative on the Fuel Oil Conservation Board (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16a-22f); and on the Advisory Board of the Institute for Sustainable Energy at ECSU.

