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Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps, Environment Connecticut Program Director
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee
Monday, March 22, 2010

OPPOSING SB. 484, An Act Concerning The Governor's Revenue Plan.

Senator Daily, Representative Staples, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony opposing SB 484. Environment Connecticut is a statewide, member-supported non-profit environmental advocacy organization. One of our top priorities is advocacy for clean energy policies that benefit our environment and strengthen our economy.

Environment Connecticut strongly opposes sections 1 through 3 of SB 484. If the legislature enacts this legislation, it will have the following effects:

- Balancing the budget with a **tax on electric bills** paid by every family and business in Connecticut.
- **Eliminate** some, or all, of the ratepayer funding that supports the programs of the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund and Connecticut Clean Energy Fund. These funds currently provide direct benefit to Connecticut ratepayers by decreasing our state's dependence on fossil fuels, cutting energy bills and putting money back in the pockets of our families.

I could offer the members of the committee a litany of reasons why the ratepayer-supported clean energy and energy efficiency funds should be protected and the "securitization" scheme of SB 484 should be rejected. Instead, I will give you just one reason: **JOBS**. The programs supported by these funds create and retain well-paying jobs in Connecticut's clean energy economy. Eliminating these funds and replacing them with a tax on electric bills will kill jobs, hurt our economy and harm every Connecticut family that pays an electric bill.

Just this past Saturday, my family received a home weatherization audit through the Home Energy Solutions program supported by the CT Energy Efficiency Fund. For a small co-pay, a local small business came to our home and performed a series of efficiency and weatherization upgrades. The small business that provided our home energy weatherization audit is creating jobs and helping families like mine cut our energy bills and put money back in our pockets.

I also serve as the chairman of the Portland Board of Education. Our community has made a commitment to participate in clean energy programs supported by the CT Clean Energy Fund. As a result of ongoing public-private partnerships between our town, schools, local businesses and families in our community, in 2008 Portland was able to install a small solar power system at Valley View Elementary school. It provides over 5% of the electricity needs of the school and has helped the Board of Education save money on its electric bills.

The local solar power company that installed Portland's solar system is one of many that has become established in Connecticut in recent years. These businesses have created hundreds of jobs designing, installing and supporting solar power systems for families, businesses and municipalities statewide. This has been made possible in large part by the solar incentive programs supported by the CT Clean Energy Fund. If the fund is eliminated, those programs will fail and Connecticut will lose solar industry jobs.

The Portland Public Schools have also benefitted from programs supported by the CT Energy Efficiency Fund. Over the past few years, the Portland Schools have implemented a number of energy efficiency improvements to our school buildings through CEEF programs. We have weatherized old buildings, upgraded lighting and HVAC systems and dramatically cut our energy bills. As a result of these efforts, the budget we recently proposed to our First Selectwoman includes tens of thousands of dollars in savings on our electric and heating costs. As a result, we are better able to keep our budget under control and retain jobs in our schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony regarding SB 484. I fully understand the magnitude of the budget crisis facing this legislature and Governor Rell. However, eliminating some, or all, of the ratepayer-supported CT Clean Energy and CT Energy Efficiency Funds and replacing them with a tax on electric bills is the wrong way to balance the budget. It would take money out of consumer's pockets, eviscerate clean energy and energy efficiency programs, and eliminate jobs in Connecticut's clean energy business community.

I urge you to reject SB 484.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps
Program Director
Environment Connecticut