

**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment and
Environment Connecticut
Before the Committee on Higher Education and Employment
Advancement**

March 4, 2010

SUPPORTING HB 5368 AAC NO WORKER LEFT BEHIND

Roger Reynolds, Senior Attorney, CT Fund for the Environment

Connecticut Fund for the Environment and Environment Connecticut **support HB 5368** that would waive up to \$5,000 per year in tuition in community and state colleges for students who enroll in is a degree or occupational certificate program in a high demand field.

With unemployment at 8.5% in Connecticut, priority number one is jobs -- and in particular, good jobs that are relevant to today's economy. Connecticut needs to capitalize on its highly skilled labor force, top research universities and connections to New York and Boston to become a leader in the clean energy and green technology economy. To do this, we believe that job creation in energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean water treatment and transportation is needed this year. Connecticut Fund for the Environment and Environment Connecticut are part of the Green Jobs Coalition, a broad coalition of environmental groups, businesses, workforce organizations and legislative leaders that has come together this year to support this agenda. We believe many of the jobs that would fall into the category of a high demand field or emerging industry jobs are, in fact, green jobs.

We suggest that the bill be amended to further define an eligible "high demand field, emerging industry or entrepreneurship program." We would be happy to engage in further discussions with the committee on this subject.

The coalition of stakeholders also strongly supports the maintenance of the Energy Investment Fund and the Energy Conservation and Loan Management Fund. Such funds have created a growing green economy in Connecticut that has in turn created the need for the very workers that this bill would train. By continuing, and indeed increasing, the energy funds and supporting degree and certificate programs in emerging green technologies, we can put people back to work and position Connecticut to compete in the clean energy and green economy.