



**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment
Before the Environment Committee**

Submitted by Jessica Morowitz, Legal Fellow
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Regarding:

H.B. 6386, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
H.B. 5363, AN ACT TRANSFERRING THE CONSERVATION FUNCTIONS OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

Connecticut Fund for the Environment ("CFE") is Connecticut's non-profit environmental advocate with over 5,700 members statewide. For over thirty years, CFE has fought to protect and preserve Connecticut's health and environment.

H.B. 6386:

CFE **supports H.B. 6386**, An Act Establishing the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The consolidation of energy policy and planning functions into the Department of Environmental Protection recognizes the essential link between the choices we make regarding energy policy and our ability to maintain a healthy environment for our citizens while establishing a secure economic foundation. With the strong leadership of the Department's new Commissioner, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection can make our air healthier to breathe, help us reach our mandated state greenhouse gas pollution reductions, create thousands of jobs, and save our state budget millions of dollars, putting real dollars back into our state's economy.

CFE is opposed, however, to the absorption of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) into the proposed Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the elimination of CEQ's staff. Eliminating this independent "watchdog" would eliminate an important check on the Department. CEQ already operates remarkably efficiently to ensure that clean air, water and land are truly protected, and without an independent staff, the CEQ will be unable to perform these functions in a meaningful way. Moreover, CEQ provides a valuable forum for citizens to have complaints heard and addressed. The same time at which we are re-examining and re-inventing the mission of the agency is no time to eliminate this critical and independent voice.

H.B. 5363:

CFE **opposes H.B. 5363**, An Act Transferring the Conservation Functions of the Department of Environmental Protection to the Department of Agriculture. The Department is under the leadership of a dynamic new Commissioner with a great vision for Connecticut's environment, and a deep understanding of the fundamental link between environmental health and economic growth. It would be unfortunate to see these critical functions stripped from the Department before he is given a chance to carry out that vision.

In addition, it makes practical sense to have the same department that regulates the state's water quality to also oversee its fisheries. While that is just one example, the same reasoning and logic holds true for all of the functions under discussion. There is a strong connection between all of these functions from a regulatory, protection and conservation standpoint. Moreover, the functions that are proposed to be transferred to the Department of Agriculture play a key role in the larger environmental health and quality of life issues that the Department of Environmental Protection will continue to oversee. Therefore, these functions should remain with the Department of Environmental Protection.

CFE thanks the Committee for its attention to these matters.