

**Written Testimony of Sue Harkness of Ashford, CT,
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee,
March 7, 2011.**

Testimony in Support of:
**Senate Bill 205, AN ACT REQUIRING THERMOSTAT MANUFACTURERS TO
PAY INCENTIVES FOR THE RETURN OF MERCURY THERMOSTATS**

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and honorable members of the Environment Committee,

I am writing because I strongly support SB 205 AN ACT REQUIRING THERMOSTAT MANUFACTURERS TO PAY INCENTIVES FOR THE RETURN OF MERCURY THERMOSTATS.

My name is Sue Harkness. I am a resident of Ashford, CT and a founding member of Conversations for a Green Connecticut and the Ashford Clean Energy Task Force. I have worked for several years as a concerned citizen to help pass legislation on climate, energy and environmental health issues. SB 205 is a bill which combines those concerns and is a very do-able solution for a serious problem.

Mercury is a highly toxic and persistent element and exposure at even a low level causes damage to the nervous system both in utero and in growing children. A single gram is enough to contaminate a large lake and cause serious health and ecological problems. We need to take all possible steps to assure that we are limiting our exposure to mercury, particularly when improved success at collecting end-of-life mercury thermostats can prevent thousands of pounds of mercury from entering our air and water.

Although Connecticut banned the sale of mercury thermostats beginning in 2004, end-of-use mercury thermostats are still a major source of pollution. There are over 1.7 million mercury thermostats remaining on the walls of Connecticut homes today; each containing about 4 grams of mercury. This means there are 11,500 pounds of mercury out there that must still be recovered safely! The Thermostat Recycling Corporation, the manufacturers' voluntary recycling program, collects only about 5% of all of end-of-life mercury thermostats. Where do the rest end up?

Mercury thermostats are often disposed of in landfills where they crack and leak, or most often are burned, releasing mercury into the air and water, where it contaminates our waterways and aquatic life. As a result, we are warned to limit consumption of many types of fish. Pregnant women have been cautioned to avoid many types of fish entirely.

We need to require manufacturers to take responsibility for their toxic products and ensure that mercury thermostats are safely collected and recycled when they are removed from use. SB 205 AN ACT REQUIRING THERMOSTAT MANUFACTURERS TO PAY INCENTIVES FOR THE RETURN OF MERCURY THERMOSTATS requires

manufacturers to pay a \$5 incentive for each thermostat returned to their program. Similar legislation in Maine and Vermont has significantly increased rates of collection. Please work to pass SB 205 this legislative session. This is a simple fix which will make a big difference to our health and to our environment at no-cost to the taxpayer!

Thank you,

Sue Harkness
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