



*Connecticut Chapter
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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Energy Committee

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Testimony On
SB1 AAC Connecticut's Energy Future

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Sierra Club-Connecticut Chapter. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Connecticut desperately needs to establish a locus of energy policy planning. We have not had one for decades. Whatever energy policy we manage to suffer has been developed by an agglomeration of semi-connected entities. The Governor has proposed siting energy planning within an expanded and renamed Department of Environmental Protection. Sierra credits the Governor for recognizing the need, and proposing a solution. Transfer of energy responsibilities from OPM to the new department is welcomed, as is incorporation of the DPUC and its various areas of responsibility within the department. The new department will thus be well positioned to address the nexus between energy and various areas of environmental protection.

We are concerned about this proposal for several reasons:

-Connecticut's DEP is one of the lowest such funded agencies in the country. Under the proposed biennium budgets it receives but 0.4 percent of general fund expenditures. It will inherit resources from OPM and the DPUC, but we are concerned about adding such an important roster of tasks to the agency without providing resources to do the job adequately.

-It leaves us without a cabinet level Commissioner of Energy whose sole task is energy, and who would be a visible spokesperson within the executive for energy issues.

-It saddles the Commissioner of the new agency with a daunting roster of responsibilities.

-It leaves somewhat undefined the roles of the continuing roster of energy commissions, boards, funds, and so on.

-It does not address the division of responsibilities for green building standards and practices between the new department and the proposed Department of Construction Services.

-It strips away the independence of the CEQ, as explained below.

That said, it is necessary to note that, in our opinion, should we proceed with creation of the DEEP, Dan Esty is exactly the right candidate for the job. I have known him for a decade at Yale Forestry and Environmental Studies, and have the highest regard for his intelligence, capacity, values, and commitment.

Both SB 1 and the Governor's budget propose merging the Council on Environmental Quality into the DEP. Sierra finds this, in a word, unacceptable.

The CEQ has existed in parallel with the DEP since its inception. It has provided invaluable commentary and observation on the DEP, other agencies, and the state's environment.

CEQ has been able to do this due to a consistently strong board of commissioners and the extraordinary skill and devotion of Karl Wagener. It has been enabled to be so successful because of its independence, at a current cost of less than \$200,000.

Sierra is well aware of the Governor's intention to fulfill a campaign promise to reduce the number of funded agencies. This bill would eliminate the CEQ, thus furthering that goal by one. However, we advise that this would be harmful public policy. The CEQ requires its independence to fulfill its watchdog role. Eliminating the CEQ staff, replacing it with resources provided to the CEQ board by the DEEP at its discretion, would significantly compromise its independence. Given the efforts of the agency to struggle with tasks far beyond its level of resources, and given the very low staffing level of the agency, CEQs independence becomes even more important. The Connecticut DEP has traditionally been one of the lowest funded environment agencies in the country. This proposed budget does nothing to provide increased staffing levels, so the new DEEP, with its new energy portfolio, will continue to struggle with resources falling far short of its obligations.

Sierra is elated at the nomination of Dan Esty as the new Commissioner of DEEP. However, our support and respect for him in no way diminishes the need for a CEQ independent of oversight by the DEEP Commissioner.

The Sierra Club recommends most strongly that CEQ staff be retained, that the Council continue to have exclusive oversight over the CEQ, and that CEQ be housed at DEP for administrative purposes only.

The deletion of run of the river for Class I hydro removes important environmental protections. Deletion of the maximum generating capacity for Class I hydro removes the incentive for establishment of additional facilities in the state. Sierra opposes both of these. All small hydro must be Low Impact Hydropower Institute (LIHI) certified.

Sierra is pleased to see provisions in the bill for:

- electronic appliance efficiency standards
- a municipal energy program
- solar installs, but the quantity must be increased
- performance contracts
- the study of repowering coal and oil
- virtual net metering, but only a pilot program
- feed in tariffs