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Background:

I am a public relations consultant from Stamford who has been promoting in-state renewable energy production for the past four years. Most recently, I have partnered with a German company to build a Biogas renewable energy plant from agricultural waste on one of Connecticut's largest dairy farms – Fairvue Farms in Woodstock. Last December, I was appointed Co-Chair of the Energy Policy Working Group for Governor Malloy's Transition Team. Our group of energy representatives and industry thought leaders developed a series of energy policy recommendations and priorities which we submitted to the new administration. In doing so, I called for the adoption of a Feed-In Tariff to support small in-state renewable energy production. This policy is very successful in Europe and Canada and has recently been adopted in Vermont and Gainesville, Florida, where farm renewable energy generation and large-scale solar projects are flourishing.

Testimony in Favor of S.B. No. 634:

1. Our farm industry in Connecticut contributes one billion dollars to our state's economy but its future is imperiled and facing serious economic troubles since most of the farms are small, family-owned businesses. By having our utilities pay a premium Feed-In Tariff with a long-term power purchase agreement for clean-energy generated through farm methane production, this would guarantee a steady and reliable return on investment to the farmer. The State of Vermont has approved Feed-In Tariff legislation which has spurred the development of in-state renewable energy from agricultural waste and helped to preserve its farm industry, which is critical to Vermont's economy.
2. Farmers would have a much better chance of receiving federal and state subsidies and bank loans which are both very competitive, because knowing that the project is backed by a utility power purchase agreement, the farm stands a greater chance of having an application for a grant and loan approved. The farmer also becomes an attractive investment option for private financing because there is a guaranteed return on investment.
3. A structured tariff will help spur more in-state renewable energy production, create more grid parity and level the playing field for the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) which requires a certain amount of energy come from renewable resources. Right now, the utilities are buying their renewable energy from the Midwest and Canada. Our ratepayers need to buy our energy from Connecticut. We need to meet the Energy Independence Act and we can accomplish this by supporting renewable production in our own state. This will be an economic asset for CT, lead to green job creation, including jobs in manufacturing and construction.

4. In the long run, it is cheaper, safer and more reliable to purchase energy in-state rather than out of state. Recently ISO-New England sent CT a bill for \$880 million for out-of-state energy transmission costs. CT ratepayers should invest in in-state generation and transmission projects which are more reliable, more secure, guarantee grid access and can aid in meeting peak demand. Our in-state fossil-fuel generating power plants are aging and the cost to retrofit or replace them with other polluting plants outweighs the cost of supporting in-state renewable generation that will make our state cleaner and safer in the long run.

5. Let's begin with offering a Feed-In Tariff to our farmers to produce alternative energy so they can grow and sustain their farms which are threatened by the high cost of operations and labor in the Northeast. If this works, then consider offering it to the solar, wind and other renewable energy industries in CT, implementing different tariff rates for different technologies and a cap on the amount of FIT arrangements that can be given to these renewable producers in any one individual year to protect the ratepayers.

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