



# Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice

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## **Testimony of Khadija Abdul-Salaam Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice Before the Environment Committee Public Hearing March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**Re: Testimony in Support of SB 93 AN ACT CONCERNING A MERCURY THERMOSTAT COLLECTION AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM.**

Good Afternoon Senator Meyer , Representative Roy and members of the Environment Committee.

My name is Khadija Abdul-Salaam and I am a member of Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice. I am here in support of SB 93 - AN ACT CONCERNING A MERCURY THERMOSTAT COLLECTION AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM.

Studies have shown that exposure to mercury at even low levels causes damage to children and fetuses, yet, mercury thermostats in Connecticut homes contain thousands of pounds of mercury. We only recycle 5% of end of use mercury thermostats. The rest end up in landfills and incinerators where they are often burned, releasing mercury into the atmosphere.

When trash is burned at the Trash to Energy Plant in Hartford, low-income families are exposed to mercury in the air. When the mercury falls into the lakes and streams, fish ingest it, and this has led to multiple warnings for pregnant women and children to avoid eating fish; a single gram of mercury is enough to contaminate all the fish in a 20 acre lake.

Manufacturers need to step up and dramatically increase their collection rates of mercury thermostats, so that mercury is recycled. Low-income Environmental Justice Communities and the public as a whole need to be protected from toxic mercury exposures. Senate Bill 93 would require manufacturers to finance a collection and recycling program and pay a \$5 incentive for each mercury thermostat returned for proper recycling. Vermont has seen a 45% increase in mercury thermostat collection after the first two years of the 5 dollar cash incentive program. And in Maine collection rates have tripled since the bounty was instituted. Our own voluntary program is currently under 5% annually and is not effective in protecting us against mercury contamination.

Let's pass SB 93 this year and protect our children now.