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SB 93

Good afternoon and thank you for hearing my testimony today. I speak on behalf of the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network, a faith based environmental group representing hundreds of churches, synagogues, and mosques. I would like to testify in support of SB 93, a bill that would require manufacturers to take responsibility for reclaiming mercury thermometers. The bill would also require manufacturers to provide an incentive for turning in the thermometers. I am opposed to SB 350, a bill supported by the industry and one that has no incentive, very few reporting requirements, and no performance goals. Clearly, if we want to reduce mercury pollution in Connecticut, then we need SB 93.

Currently, thermometers are not being disposed of properly. As builders and developers tear down and renovate buildings, the old mercury thermometers come down off the walls, where they are promptly tossed in the trash. From there, they typically go to the incinerator, where they are burned, releasing mercury into the air, which then gets into our drinking water and our soil. CT homes have 1.7 million mercury thermostats still in use in homes – that's over 11,000 pounds of mercury. Mercury is highly toxic; it only takes 1 gram of mercury to contaminate all of the fish in a 20 acre lake. Mercury has been linked to cancer, asthma, and birth defects and, of course, children are the most susceptible to its damaging effects.

Connecticut has attempted voluntary programs in the past, but they have failed to reclaim many thermostats. In contrast, a program in ME, one that utilizes incentives and performance goals, has been much more successful. We need a state-mandated program – a program that requires the recycling of mercury thermostats, while also providing incentives and outlining goals in order to make this program successful.

I would like to state that this is not just a public health issue; it is a moral, spiritual, and ethical issue as well. As children of God, we need to remember that this planet is a gift and one that we should not take lightly. We are called to be stewards and to take care of creation. We are called to protect our brothers and sisters, those less fortunate, and to care for the sick and vulnerable. When we take active steps to reduce the toxins in our eco-system, then we are doing what is right for God's earth and all that live on it.

Please pass SB 93. Thank you for your time.