



**State of Connecticut**  
**Senator Donald E. Williams, Jr.**  
*President Pro Tempore*

**Testimony of**

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**Senate President Pro Tempore**

**Tuesday, March 20, 2012**

**Energy and Technology Committee**

Senator Fonfara, Representative Nardello, members of the Energy and Technology Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on HB 5544 AAC Storm Preparation and Emergency Response. My comments will be on sections 10-12.

The two storms that greatly impacted our state last year provide a wake-up call for us to be better prepared, more informed, and take the necessary steps to strengthen our utility systems in the event of another emergency situation.

One way to do this is through the development of micro-grids. Micro-grids are small-scale, centralized electric systems that generate and distribute electricity to customers in a localized area. They are reliable, environmentally sound, lessen our dependence on fossil fuels, and diversify our energy sources. They are particularly useful when there is a disruption in electric reliability due to power outages. Micro-grids could be powered using Class 1 renewable energy which includes fuel cells, an industry that has a large presence in Connecticut.

Under the proposal before you, micro-grids would allow critical sites, such as hospitals, police stations, grocery stores, gas stations, and nursing homes, to remain operational during power outages and would help citizens have a greater sense of security and comfort, particularly during an emergency. In a larger sense, micro-grids would bolster our state's commitment to renewable energy, help to create and attract jobs, and strengthen state and local economic development.

I support mandating the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to create a grant and loan program that would be available to a variety of entities, including municipalities, electric distribution companies, and private companies, to develop a micro-grid system. The program would be funded with \$5 million and DEEP would have the ability to use this funding to leverage additional dollars. Priority would be given to projects that could be up and running by October 1 of this year. Reporting requirements would ensure that the Legislature would know the ongoing status and output of each micro-grid project.

I also strongly support sections 10 and 11 of HB 5544. Connecticut must invest in utility and technological infrastructure on a continual basis. These investments include water and sewer line replacement, the installment of fiberoptic cables, installing natural gas pipelines where available, and burying power lines where feasible. Although this is a large financial investment, it will better position Connecticut for a global 21<sup>st</sup> economy.

By requiring PURA to be notified, the proposal before you is a first step toward coordinating efforts between utility companies, municipalities, and the Department of Transportation when road projects are occurring. The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) would be required to increase efforts and coordination in this endeavor and report back to the Legislature early next year.

Thank you for your consideration.