



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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TESTIMONY

DATE: March 22, 2013

TO: Appropriations Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly

BY: Barbara C. Wagner  
Chair

RE: H.B. 6354, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations  
Concerning General Government

My name is Barbara Wagner. I am the chair of the Council on Environmental Quality (or CEQ). I testified in February on the Council's proposed appropriation. I am here today to discuss Sections 132 through 134 of House Bill 6354, which would move the CEQ into the Office of Governmental Accountability from its current location within DEEP (for administrative purposes only). At its February 27 meeting, the Council discussed the proposed consolidation and asked me to communicate to you that the current arrangement has worked well and efficiently for more than 40 years.

Some newer members of the Committee might not be completely familiar with the Council and its work. A summary of the Council's responsibilities are appended to this testimony. The Council probably is best known for producing the state's official "state of the environment" report. We will be submitting the report for 2012 next week. The annual report is generally recognized as being consistently accurate and objective. The CEQ's reports focus on results; they document successes and do not sugarcoat failures. The keys to being able to produce such reports are independence and adequate (though modest) resources. The Council's annual and special reports and recommendations have led to many improvements in our environment.

Since 1971, the Council has been within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for administrative purposes only. The Department has provided office space, meeting space and essential services such as payroll, purchasing, and access to a computer network. The arrangement has worked well, and the Council's independent analysis and voice has not been compromised. In any of our reports, you will find information that is not altogether flattering of the larger agency, but the overall relationship remains professional on both sides. You will see that in the report to be submitted and published next week.

I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

## Council Duties

The duties of the Council on Environmental Quality are described in Sections 22a-11 through 22a-13 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

The Council is a nine-member board that works independently of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (except for administrative functions). The Chairman and four other members are appointed by the Governor, two members by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and two by the Speaker of the House. The Council's primary responsibilities include:

1. Submittal to the Governor of an annual report on the status of Connecticut's environment, including progress toward goals of the statewide environmental plan, with recommendations for remedying deficiencies of state programs.
2. Review of state agencies' construction projects.
3. Investigation of citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws.

In addition, under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) and its attendant regulations, the Council on Environmental Quality reviews Environmental Impact Evaluations that state agencies develop for major projects. The Council publishes the *Environmental Monitor*, the official publication for scoping notices and environmental impact evaluations for state projects under CEPA. The *Environmental Monitor* also is the official publication for notice of intent by state agencies to sell or transfer state lands.