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Testimony of Justin Haaheim, Connecticut Regional Coordinator for 350.org
Commerce Committee March 19, 2013

In Support of H.B. No. 6650 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS.

I strongly support this bill to provide a stable funding source for oil efficiency programs. Funding for these programs is critical. Almost 50% of Connecticut residences are heated with oil heat, and without the solution that this legislation proposes those residents will lose access to our state's energy efficiency programs on July 1st 2013 -- programs that cut our energy use and environmental impact, save consumers money and create jobs right here in Connecticut. At a time when our economy is struggling, unemployment is high and the climate crisis looms large, we must support these programs and ensure equal access for all people for all fuels. HB 6650 does that, and I strongly support it.

What we're really talking about here is leveling a playing field that has never really been level and making sure everyone contributes their fair share. Our state's efficiency programs are funded (in part) through gas and electric ratepayer dollars, but oil has never had to contribute to that fund. Efficiency for oil customers has come through a variety of temporary and last-minute fixes, pulling in funds from sources like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auctions instead of from the logical source: fuel oil.

An uneven playing field like this and so many temporary fixes has meant an unstable market for the efficiency contractors who are leading successful businesses and creating high-quality jobs here in CT. The uneven playing field and funding uncertainty seems all the more arbitrary and unfair when you hear the stories of these contractors having to lay off workers when oil funding dries up and half their work goes out the window. We can do better for them, and we can do better as a state.

Oil dealers have been saying for years they will establish their own voluntary heating oil fund, but we have yet to see any meaningful effort there. The fact is that what makes sense is everyone contributing equally to an efficiency fund that is generating jobs in our state, lowering energy bills, saving consumers money and protecting our environment, and HB 6650 does that. I'm proud to support it, and strongly encourage this committee to pass it.