



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Commissioner*



**Testimony presented to the Environment Committee of  
The Connecticut General Assembly  
By the Connecticut Department of Agriculture  
March 22, 2013**

**S.B. 1134 - AN ACT CONCERNING OUTDOOR WOOD-BURNING FURNACES**

Chairs Meyer and Gentile, Vice Chairs Maynard and Albis, Ranking Members Chapin and Shaban and members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I would like to begin my testimony by thanking Commissioner Esty of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and his team, for their open-minded approach in seeking resolution to what has been a vexing issue before the legislature for far too long. The use of wood to heat homes and businesses has been a staple in Connecticut since the first inhabitants arrived. Wood is an affordable needed alternative to costly foreign fossil fuels at a time when it is critical to reduce our dependence on those fuels. Connecticut has been blessed with an abundance of this renewable, sustainable, readily available natural resource. It is incumbent upon us to use this resource in a wise manner that is consistent with striving for a clean healthy environment.

Connecticut residents, including farmers and other businesspersons across the economic spectrum, use a wide variety of wood burning stoves and furnaces to heat their homes and establishments. The economic impact to those individuals would be significant if there were to be a discontinuation of wood burning furnaces in our state.

With this in mind, staff from DEEP and DoAg met and hammered out a compromise first step approach to acquiring the data that will be needed for the application of limited resources in an intelligent fashion towards resolving reported health and safety concerns. Agreement was reached that only "clean wood", that is to say, wood that has not been treated with any fire retardant, pesticide, preservative, or chemical treatment, could be used as a fuel source.

The most critical agreement reached is that after October 1, 2013 no person shall sell or offer for sale any outdoor wood-burning furnace unless such furnace is a Phase 2 qualified model, under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Hydronic Heater Program. While this seems like a logical first step circumstances prevented this agreement for far too long and I am pleased to report this will solve a critical concern moving forward. This leaves us with what to do about the issues that have been allowed to accumulate in the past.

Agreement has been reached with the DEEP that data be assembled in order to arrive at how best to pinpoint limited available resources to cleaning up these potential risks. To approach this task there needs to be an "inventory" rather than a "survey", of every outdoor wood burning furnace in the state. Regulators need to know the type of furnace in operation, the distance of the chimney to the property line, the number of residences within

**500 feet of a furnace chimney and the stack height of that chimney relative to the neighboring residential roof peaks. Only then will we have the necessary data to determine what types of potential concerns exist and the most economically efficient manner to alleviate the problem.**

**This information will be assembled for the first time and will inform us as to the most troublesome units and will in effect, prioritize the units that most likely should be relocated, replaced or upgraded first.**

**The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection are working together to identify sources of funding to first, inventory, identify and quantify information on the existing units and to then offer incentives for their replacement.**

**We are grateful for the assistance of our sister agencies DEEP and Public Health and we look forward to finding a remedy that will balance the needs of our citizens.**