

3/7/13

Senator Duff, Representative Reed and members of the committee,

My name is Kate Donnelly and I will be speaking on Governor's bill 6360. I am the Chair of the Hampton Green Energy Committee and former First Selectwoman of our small town.

I am impressed with the thoughtful direction of the comprehensive energy strategy but now I truly understand the phrase "the devil is in the details". The most damaging detail is the overreliance on natural gas. I oppose this for a variety of reasons. Natural gas is a finite fossil fuel with volatile prices. The bill states, "DEEP acknowledges that there are significant environmental and public health issues associated with the drilling and transport of natural gas, which the State will actively address wherever possible. " Let us address it now and invest our resources elsewhere. Building costly natural gas lines does not benefit the vast majority of citizens in our state. Hampton and the Quiet Corner will not benefit in any way from this proposed expansion of natural gas.

What could help our town's residents and businesses?

To quote Governor Malloy, the best energy is the energy we don't use. There is no reason why Connecticut should not lead the nation in energy efficiency. Not only does energy efficiency save money, stop waste of finite and polluting fossil fuels, it also provides much needed jobs for our residents. I encourage you to fully fund energy efficiency for all fuels. I urge you to establish a stable funding source for heating oil energy efficiency. I agree that ratepayers cannot indefinitely support the bulk of energy efficiency program budgets and urge you to make efficiency a priority with the funding of programs.

I urge you to develop and implement programs that will help low income residents to make their homes energy efficient. Implementation of the program has been appalling and too many residents are living in discomfort with out of sight energy bills.

As a proud owner of a solar photovoltaic system for both my home and my business, I urge you to support renewable energy. Both my home and commercial solar installations reside on the roof of a barn on my property. But because we do not have virtual net metering in our state, I cannot use the energy generation from the panels purchased for my business toward usage in my home and visa versa.

This proposed bill allows \$10 million for farms and municipalities to use virtual net metering. I urge you to lift the \$10 million cap and broaden the program to allow businesses and neighborhoods to share renewable resources. Massachusetts has an inspiring program where communities can come together to purchase and share renewable energy. What is preventing us from doing the same? We have great potential for solar farms in our towns and state especially on closed landfills and brownfields. We can rectify past mistakes with investment in clean renewable energy. This strategy also generates badly needed well-paid local jobs.

It is often difficult for small towns to participate and access energy programs established for municipalities in the state. For example, performance contracting for energy efficiency is a helpful tool to upgrade municipal buildings. The threshold of work needed to make a project attractive to lenders is often too high for small towns. If we as small towns were allowed to work together to aggregate projects we could proceed with desperately needed energy upgrades. I urge you to allow regional cooperation for performance contracting.

As our legislators you are in the unique position to integrate energy policy in a way that not only helps ratepayers, and the environment but also provides access to well paying jobs for our people. Clean energy jobs can help stem the migration of young people to other states. Without jobs we offer them little. I urge you to reconsider investing so much into natural gas and instead invest in energy efficiency, clean renewable energy, and sustainable jobs in sustainable technology.

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