

Testimony of **Nancy Watson** Before the Energy & Technology Committee

Regarding

HB 6360, AAC IMPLEMENTATION OF CONNECTICUT'S COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY STRATEGY

Submitted by

[Nancy Watson]

March 7, 2013 Senator Duff, Representative Reed, and members of the Committee,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to comment on House Bill 6360, An Act Concerning Implementation of Connecticut's Comprehensive Energy Strategy . **I support the commitment to energy efficiency and a positive, long-term clean energy future for our state illustrated in this bill and in the CES.**

Connecticut should be a leader in clean energy. As a concerned citizen experiencing the third "100 year storm", this fall, I am so pleased to see the state forcefully fully push forward sensible energy initiatives. (Parenthetically, I have wanted to convert to natural gas but it has been prohibitively expensive so I'm particularly pleased about the natural gas proposals.) The move towards more public transportation I also heartily applaud. These clean energy proposals can promote economic growth as well. My environmentalist, college age daughter interned at a "zero carbon footprint" office building and saw how energy efficiency can PROMOTE economic growth as well as preserve the environment. Not to mention reducing the health and medical costs associated with pollution.

To meet the state's carbon reduction targets, we must improve the efficiency of our buildings (particularly older housing and large commercial buildings), as approximately 40 percent of Connecticut's greenhouse gas emissions are generated by heating, cooling and providing electricity to our buildings. **Benchmarking and disclosing the energy usage** of homes for sale, apartments where tenants pay for heating, and major commercial buildings will help prospective buyers and tenants make wise decisions and save money. It will also reward building owners who invest in upgrades by making efficiency a market force that increases a building's value.

HB 6360 includes technical changes to finally **invest in all cost-effective efficiency measures** and help state efficiency programs operate more smoothly. Decoupling utility companies' revenue streams from actual energy usage will remove their disincentive to promote lower energy usage, making them stronger partners on promoting efficiency programs.

The state must still address the need for a **steady, fair and permanent funding stream that will allow residents who heat with fuel oil to fully access the state's efficiency programs.** I support the move towards cleaner fuel oil on the accelerated timeline described in the bill. While conversions to **natural gas will be a necessary part of progress toward clean air, it should not be treated as a permanent solution.** We should limit the payback period for gas main expansions so that we can transition more effectively to renewable energy in the long run. In addition, the state should compare all of the economic and environmental costs and benefits of expansions with other alternatives, such as energy efficiency measures or ground source heat pumps, and compare the job impacts. Natural gas conversions should be paired with efficiency improvements, to ensure that homes that convert to gas are not wasting that fuel. Perhaps most importantly, Connecticut's natural gas plan should include a mechanism that ensures it is consistent with the state's long-term climate change goals.

Lastly, we must continue to **encourage the growth of truly clean, regionally-produced renewable energy by protecting the integrity of the Renewable Portfolio Standard.** I

oppose HB 6531, which would dilute and weaken the RPS, and HB 6532, which would increase subsidies for trash incineration facilities. HB 6535 could be rewritten to incentivize other forms of clean energy without lessening incentives for wind and solar.

Please support strong clean energy and energy efficiency measures in HB 6360 for their benefits to our air quality and climate goals, for the cost savings these policies offer Connecticut residents, and for the additional economic activity and jobs this energy strategy will generate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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