

Written Testimony of Robert Nixon
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Energy and Technology Committee

March 7, 2013

Written Testimony Concerning Governor's Bill 6360 AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION
OF CONNECTICUT'S COMPHRENSIVE ENERGY STRATEGY.

Dear Senator Duff, Representative Reed and members of the committee,

I am submitting testimony before the General Assembly's Energy and Technology Committee to enhance its work on House Bill 6360 AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF CONNEXTICUT'S COMPHRENSIVE ENERGY STRATEGY.

The long term strategy as outlined by Governor Dannel Malloy has a firm foundation on energy efficiency, clean energy and new models of financing. However, the strategy is missing key elements to lay the groundwork for a real transformation to a green economy. It lacks a strong commitment for community energy partnerships to expand the consumer demand for energy efficiency and clean energy, and major investments in green workforce training to create the workforce for the future especially in building and constructions sectors.

I am a longtime resident of Southwestern Connecticut, and suffered from week long blackouts during Tropical Storm Irene and Superstorn Sandy. Extreme weather is here to stay and it now time for our state's leaders in the General Assembly to plan for the future with many more extreme storms and find ways to transform to a more sustainable and climate friendly economy. We have the knowhow and the creativity to make great strides for a clean energy future. This means not getting stuck in any trend of the moment when the state should put its energy to embrace transformational technology that is not dependent on a finite fuel source.

Over the near term, the state of Connecticut must enrich consumer choice and energy efficiency in promoting conversion to natural gas. The Shale Gas revolution has certainly disrupted national and global energy markets toward cleaner fuels. This is a good short term trend and should enhance movement away from dirtier alternatives. But new conserversions must be driven by energy efficiencies first, so

consumers benefits from new boilers and heating and cooling technology. We simply do not want to only exchange heating oil for natural gas, and do nothing more. That would be a blown opportunity for a cleaner energy future. To push beyond the current debate of oil versus gas, the General Assembly ought to expand fund for micro-grids and net metering far beyond the current \$15 million pilot project. We should put public investment behind this type of smart technology with government dollars to harden our vulnerable energy infrastructure.

The General Assembly ought to embrace strong community energy partnerships to boost the local demand and financing for deep energy efficiencies called for in the Comprehensive Energy Strategy. These community partnerships are effectively in engaging urban and moderate income neighborhoods into the work of energy efficiency and clean energy. It can help create new relationships to bring more people into workforce training in green technology, particularly in the building and constructions sectors. Community based groups are known and trusted in communities, they speak the same language and understand the community culture. We are asking for a state-wide investment in community outreach to increase home and business retrofits with a focus on obtaining deeper efficiency measures and serving economically deprived communities.

Green workforce training is often left off the agenda of many discussions about energy efficiency and clean energy. We need to building the green workforce of tomorrow by making major investments in green “hard skills” training, in areas of heating, building retrofits, air conditioning and new boilers and residential and commercial energy systems. The Conn. General Assembly has a responsibility to help create new partnerships around green workforce training involving contractors, labor unions and community groups to recruit and train the new green workforce especially for people who do not go to college.

The goal is also to create a sector of green retrofit work that creates high paying wages, encourages workers and contractors to gain high levels of skills and encourages more established contractors to enter the energy efficiency and retrofit sector. This will enhance investment in a new energy efficient clean

energy future. It will also require major public sector investments in creating the green workforce that we want.

Connecticut's new Comprehensive Energy Strategy lays out ambitious goals around energy efficiency, renewable technology and clean energy. But the vision for "a clean break from Connecticut's energy past" ought not to rely on limited means and short term tactics. It must devise ambitious tactics and look beyond the fog of the current energy debate. The state must embrace truly transformational decentralized technology, investment in a green workforce and state policy to get us there.

Thanks you for your consideration,

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