

Testimony of Rose Chambers on S.B. 1138

The Energy and Technology Committee

March 19th, 2013

Chairman Duff, Chairwoman Reed, Vice Chairs LeBeau, and Steinberg, Ranking Members Chapin and Hoydick, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee. My name is Rose Chambers, and I am a student at the University of Connecticut in Storrs and a member of UConn PIRG.

I am here today to speak in opposition to certain elements of S.B. 1138 AAC Connecticut's Clean Energy Goals.

It is UConn PIRG's opinion that the proposed bill gives an unfair advantage to well established distributors and generators of large, more conventional energy and renewable technologies whilst simultaneously putting smaller companies such as renewable energy startups, local businesses and providers of emerging technologies at a disadvantage. The largest renewable energy providers in the northeast region provide products such as hydropower on a regional basis. Increased support for hydropower projects would privilege out of state corporations over Connecticut businesses.

We oppose granting further subsidies to major regional providers of renewables who use hydropower as a major source of generation. We believe that hydropower is not a truly clean energy source and should not be classified as such. Previously, large scale hydropower projects throughout the US and Canada has drastically altered river flows, causing watershed damage and soil erosion by impeding the natural flow of sediment. Many species of aquatic and land animals are also harmed by such projects. Furthermore, hydroelectricity often comes at a cost to adjacent communities, not to mention the immense material cost of transporting power from the generating site to the marketplace. Outsourcing our renewable energy needs to large, regional hydropower conglomerates fails to spur the creation of new, local clean energy projects. If the definition of hydroelectricity is successfully expanded as a Class I renewable energy source, or a subsection thereof, such projects will receive state approval and subsidies.

While supporting renewable energy may seem like a positive goal, we feel that the general assembly should be cautious about which energy providers and types of sustainable technologies it supports. It is our position that the classification of Class I renewable energies ought to be preferential towards emerging technologies or providers that would help create jobs and businesses in this state. We believe that the function of the RPS is to spur experimental and emerging technologies which will not survive in the marketplace without the support of this bill.

As you consider goals that will shape the state's energy future, we urge you to support power generation technologies which will benefit our state both environmentally and economically. We believe the best way to do that is by supporting local, Connecticut owned and operated businesses that contribute, to a 21st century power grid that produces energy near where it is consumed.