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WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
REPRESENTATIVE ELISSA WRIGHT
STATE REPRESENTATIVE, 41ST DISTRICT

*Raised S.B. No. 1013, AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND DATA
COLLECTION*

*Environment Committee Public Hearing
March 8, 2013*

Senator Myer, Representative Gentile, members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of *S.B. No. 1013, AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND DATA COLLECTION*.

Flooding in recent major storm events has made sea level rise a much more urgent issue in our state. Sea level rise, in conjunction with increasing storm frequency and intensities, is putting Connecticut's coastal areas, major infrastructure, and transportation routes at risk for huge economic damage.

In 2012, Public Act 12-101, Section 10, authorized the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), within available appropriations, to establish a pilot program to encourage innovative and low-impact approaches to shoreline protection and adaptation to rising seas. It authorized the commissioner, in collaboration with academia, federal agencies, and other entities, to take steps to conduct a shoreline management study to enhance coastal resilience, with special consideration for areas significantly impacted by coastal storms. It further authorized the University of Connecticut and the State University System, in conjunction with other academic institutions, to seek funds for use in establishing and maintaining a science and engineering capacity to support shoreline planning and management of coastal hazards related to sea level rise.

This bill takes the logical next step and directs DEEP and the University of Connecticut to develop a plan to establish a Connecticut Center for Coasts to conduct research; collect data on shoreline change; take stock of our primary infrastructure along the coast and assess the impacts of rising seas and increased flooding risk; promote educational awareness and participation in climate change adaptation; and lead the strategic planning effort to protect ecosystems and enhance the resilience of coastal property and other lands subject to the effects of sea level rise and flooding from upland areas.

Connecticut has a rich source of ongoing research, education, and expertise in diverse disciplines at the University of Connecticut's Department of Marine Sciences, the Connecticut Sea Grant College Program, the School of Engineering, and the College of Agriculture. The proposed Connecticut Center for Coasts will take advantage of

that expertise to provide needed understanding about regional climate change and sea level rise related to the critical issue of preservation of the Connecticut shoreline on regional, Sound-wide, and local levels.

A core of top-notch scientists and resource specialists in oceanography, ecology, biology, marine chemistry, coastal engineering, and cross-disciplinary analysis of patterns and processes in the coastal ocean and coastal marine environment, centered at UConn's Marine Sciences Department at Avery Point, are uniquely positioned to expand the scope of existing collaborations with DEEP and federal agencies in developing a context for science-based, data-driven decision-making and in furthering our understanding of complex coastal and ocean interactions.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be heard on this issue today.