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Testimony of State Representative Geoff Luxenberg, 12th District
Transportation Committee Public Hearing
February 4, 2013

Proposed H.B. No. 6055 An Act Promoting the Use of Fuel Cells in Vehicles

Dear Chairman Guerrero, Chairman Maynard, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, I am here to testify today in support of House Bill 6055, which promotes the use of fuel cells in vehicles. If Bill No. 6055 is adopted, this legislation would amend the general statutes to require that by 2015 at least one percent of the state fleet of light duty passenger vehicles, and at least one percent of the state's bus fleet, be powered by fuel. It would also require that by 2025 at least ten percent of said fleets be powered by fuel cell. The legislation would exempt all fuel cell vehicle purchases from the state sales tax.

The purpose of these changes is to better assist the state of Connecticut in making a commitment to invest in fuel cell technology, in accordance with recommendations made by the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT) and Connecticut Department of Transportation. CCAT and the Connecticut DOT recommends the state of Connecticut move in this direction of transitioning our state fleet of vehicles to fuel cell power vehicles for many reasons. The most important impetus for the bill is to protect and create good, high-paying, and high-tech jobs in our state.

Connecticut has eight fuel cell companies that employ thousands of people. Most notably, United Technologies, and UTC employs many citizens in our districts. Because of our entrepreneurial spirit, in addition to our well-educated scientific work force and our geographic proximity between Boston and New York, Connecticut has emerged as a world leader in fuel cell technology. I am proud of our accomplishments and I hope that the list extends. This emerging industry shows great promise for transforming our environment, reducing our carbon footprint and creating quality jobs for the future.

The state unemployment rate was 8.6 percent in December. Many constituents are concerned about the business climate in our state. Constituents frequently raise the following questions: "What are you doing to create jobs? What are you doing to keep companies here in Connecticut? What are you doing to make sure Connecticut's economy can flourish and compete with other states?"

These questions allow me to emphasize how important it is to take advantage of the available natural benefits and economic strengths. In the Transportation Committee, I imagine there is often a discussion about how to maximize our state's strategic location between two major economic engines, Boston and New York. The rail lines between New Haven and Springfield fit in this category. My state senator who sits on this committee, Steve Cassano, has spoken very eloquently about making sure we put Connecticut's ports in a position that allows us to take advantage of the Panama Canal project. The fuel cell industry in Connecticut is our diamond in the rough. We are world leaders and we have companies with great technology. We also have the scientific work force, but we do not have the state government incentives and commitments that would protect, expand, and capitalize our natural strength.

6055 demonstrates to these companies that their Connecticut workers -- and their Connecticut workers that we will support their traditional work ethic, groundbreaking research and development efforts and improvements to our environment, as well as capitalize on our competitive economic advantage in this emerging industry.

I believe the immediate upfront costs of this legislation are negligible and the benefits of putting the framework in place for state support for more efficient high tech vehicles will create and protect jobs and add to our state's revenue base over time.

I thank you for your indulgence and consideration of this legislation and am open to any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rep. Geoff Luxenberg
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