



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – March 14, 2014
Joint Committee on Planning and Development

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert J. Klee

HOUSE BILL NO. 5505 - AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF A STATE-WIDE PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding House Bill No. 5505 - AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF A STATE-WIDE PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP supports this concept and we have discussed this legislation with other interested parties who strongly support the need for the study of a state-wide property maintenance code. DEEP sees the elimination of the blight through a consistent standardized property maintenance code as integral to the protection of the public's safety, health and the environment. DEEP participated in a unofficial task force of over fifty stakeholder members to discuss this same issue in 2008, including, but not limited to, local zoning enforcement officials, health directors, the Department of Public Health, the Office of the State Building Inspector, CT Environmental Health Association, developers and several property owners and tenant associations. The Task force reached consensus for the adoption of a state-wide property maintenance code.

The DEEP is cognizant of the continued problems of blight can exist in every municipality in the state. Blighted, poorly maintained properties attract criminal activities including violent crimes, arson and the illegal disposal of solid and hazardous waste creating a threat to the health of the community and the environment. The majority of Connecticut's municipalities do not have local housing or blight codes which result in a constant stream of complaints and request for assistance from DEEP. These complaints often indicate that the community does not receive assistance from municipalities, due to among other reasons, a lack of necessary codes, with illegally dumped garbage, sewage releases asbestos and other sanitation issues. In addition, local code enforcement officials regularly request assistance from the DEEP to clean-up blighted properties. Most of these complaints arise from geographic areas that are already experiencing a disproportional risk of exposure to industrial pollution and substandard housing.

DEEP supports this concept because it would facilitate the revitalization and economic development of these areas by requiring uniform compliance and eliminate confusion for landlords, tenants, investors and developers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov (or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov).