2074 Park St., #210
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 231-8842
www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org
www.facebook.com/EnvironmentConnecticut

Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps, Environment Connecticut Campaign Director
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Planning and Development Committee

March 13, 2014

Opposing Senate Bill 404: AN ACT CONCERNING BUILDING PERMIT FEES FOR CLASS I RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS AND RENEWABLE ENERGY CREDITS FOR TRASH-TO-ENERGY FACTILITIES

Senator Osten, Representative Rojas, and members of the committee: My name is Chris Phelps and I am Campaign Director for Environment Connecticut. Our organization is a nonprofit member-based environmental advocacy organization working to protect Connecticut's air, water, and natural landscape. We appreciate this opportunity to offer testimony in **opposition to SB 404.**

A generation ago, Connecticut's policy makers chose to phase out the use of landfills in favor of trash incineration to dispose of municipal solid waste (MSW.) Today, Connecticut burns more of its trash than any other state in the nation. Incinerators in our state produce significant amounts of air pollution, emit toxic chemicals into our environment, and produce significant quantities of hazardous "fly ash" that, ironically enough, must be disposed of in specialized hazardous waste landfills.

Connecticut's incinerators produce and sell electricity (so-called "waste-to-energy") in order to offset a portion of the high costs of disposing of MSW at these facilities. When Connecticut's Renewable Electricity Standard (known as the Renewable Portfolio Standard) was created approximately 15 years ago, incinerators were given a preferential status within the statute, providing a subsidy to their operations by requiring utilities to purchase at least 3% of Connecticut's electricity from the incinerators.

Environment Connecticut has long opposed inclusion of polluting, non-renewable technologies, such as trash incineration, within Connecticut's Renewable Electricity statute. That statute's fundamental purpose is to create a market-based incentive for utilities and power generators to build new, clean, renewable electricity sources such as wind and solar power and to reduce our dependence on polluting and dangerous energy such as fossil fuels and nuclear power. Using the statute to subsidize pollution from incinerators is a perversion of the very point of a Renewable Electricity Standard.

In recent years, CRRA and the incineration industry have repeatedly attempted to convince Connecticut policy makers to write into the Renewable Electricity statute a guaranteed subsidy for incinerators to be paid by ratepayers. Each time such proposals have been introduced, they have been rejected by the General Assembly. Section 2 of SB 404 represents yet another such proposal. It too should be rejected by the committee and the General Assembly as a whole. This provision would guarantee incinerators a subsidy from ratepayers of one cent per kilowatt hour of electricity sold by these facilities. That subsidy would be paid by ratepayers *in addition to* the market price paid by utilities for the electricity produced by incinerators. SB 404 proposes to **raise electric rates** for ratepayers in Connecticut in order to subsidize polluting incinerators operated by quasi-public and private for-profit incinerator companies.

If it becomes law, SB 404 would provide a guaranteed subsidy for trash incinerators that produce electricity, while clean and renewable electricity generation sources such as solar and wind power would (appropriately) *not* receive a guaranteed per-kilowatt hour subsidy. At a time when the increasingly rapid onset of global warming-fueled climate change requires policy makers to act decisively to move our energy systems towards clean, renewable resources, it would be a terrible mistake to create new incentives for electric generation from polluting facilities such as incinerators.

Instead, Environment Connecticut urges the committee members to support Governor's Senate Bill 27, AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S RECYCLING AND MATERIALS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY. This legislation, which was developed pursuant to the recommendations of the Resource Recovery Task Force established by PA 13-285, lays a foundation to modernize Connecticut's waste management policies. In particular, we believe that SB 27 has the potential to set Connecticut on a path towards increasing source reduction of waste, as well as recycling, and to reduce our over-dependence on dangerous, polluting, and unaffordable trash incineration.

We respectfully urge the committee to reject Section 2 of SB 404.

Sincerely,

Chris Phelps
Campaign Director
Environment Connecticut
2074 Park Street, #210
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 231-8842
www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org