

ConnPIRG

**Standing Up
To Powerful Interests**

**Testimony of Abraham Scarr, Director
Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG)**

in opposition to

Proposed Senate Bill No. 404:

**AN ACT CONCERNING BUILDING PERMIT FEES FOR CLASS I RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS AND
RENEWABLE ENERGY CREDITS FOR TRASH-TO-ENERGY FACILITIES.**

Chairperson Osten, Chairperson Rojas and Members of the Committee: My name is Abe Scarr and I am the Director of the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to Proposed Senate Bill No. 404: AN ACT CONCERNING BUILDING PERMIT FEES FOR CLASS I RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS AND RENEWABLE ENERGY CREDITS FOR TRASH-TO-ENERGY FACILITIES.

ConnPIRG is a non-profit, non-partisan consumer group. Our Zero Waste Program works to protect public health and boost our economy by decreasing waste and increasing reuse, recycling, and composting.

We oppose any efforts to further subsidize incineration with tax-payer or rate-payer dollars. It is time to stop paying for pollution.

This bill sets a minimum price of 1 cent / kWh for Class II trash incineration RECs. At a time when the state is deciding to move away from incineration and towards reduce/reuse/recycle, this bill would work counter to our materials management goals. It would also undermine the purpose of our renewable energy program, which aims to incentivize new clean energy sources, not legacy dirty ones.

Connecticut made a decision forty years ago to transform its approach to waste management by phasing out landfills and investing in incinerators. Because incinerators are expensive to build, operate, and maintain, the legislature created a quasi-public agency, the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority (CRRA). CRRA was given bonding authority, which it used to build four of the state's six incinerators. CRRA also entered into generous long contracts with cities and towns that guaranteed years of revenue to pay back those bonds.

Because of this over-investment in incineration, Connecticut now burns more trash per person than any other state in the country. Incineration is a public health threat, expensive to taxpayers, and a waste of valuable resources. Our over-reliance on incineration directly contributes to our low and stagnant recycling rate.

CRRA and private incinerator operators have come to the General Assembly for years asking for a subsidy along these lines. This past year, the General Assembly passed Public Act 13-285¹ which, among other things, created the Resources Recovery Task Force. The task force was directed to report an “analysis of the financial status of the resource recovery facilities operating in the state *and recommendations to improve such status*,” [emphasis added] and a “review of the applicable statutes and regulations regarding renewable energy certificate credits provided to resource recovery facilities in the state and a recommendation on whether such statutes should be modified.”

The task force included representation from CRRA and both the private incinerator companies, Covanta and Wheelabrator. They advocated strongly for a REC subsidy on the task force, and were the leading source of a subcommittee report² that fully advocated for a REC subsidy. Despite this, the full task force balked at recommending a REC subsidy, and instead recommended the state “consider” a REC subsidy.³

Make no mistake: the full task force considered and rejected supporting a REC subsidy. Considering the mission and makeup of the task force, this is remarkable.

Alternatively, the task force made a strong recommendation that Connecticut redouble its efforts to rely less on incineration: “Given the uncertain sustainability of the state’s waste-to-energy infrastructure, the state should accelerate diversion, product stewardship, and the creation of the infrastructure and regulatory environment necessary to reduce the state’s dependence on waste-to-energy.”⁴

This called-for acceleration is appropriately taken up by Governor’s Bill 27⁵, which lays the groundwork to transform materials management in Connecticut. We applaud Governor Malloy, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner Klee, and the legislative leadership for their support of Governor’s Bill 27.

The General Assembly has considered changes to incinerator RECs for years and rejected them every time. This committee should reject them again.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to proposed Senate Bill 404.

Abe Scarr
860-233-7554
abe@connpirg.org

¹http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill_num=1081&which_year=2013&SUBMIT1.x=10&SUBMIT1.y=9&SUBMIT1=Normal

²http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/waste_management_and_disposal/solid_waste/transforming_matls_mgmt/resources_recovery_task_force/rrtf_final_report.pdf

³http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/waste_management_and_disposal/solid_waste/transforming_matls_mgmt/resources_recovery_task_force/rrtf_final_report.pdf

⁴ Ibid

⁵http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill_num=27&which_year=2014&SUBMIT1.x=0&SUBMIT1.y=0&SUBMIT1=Normal