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FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



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Empowering Communities, Advocating Solutions.

Testimony Regarding HB 5288
Testimony by Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Louis W. Burch, Program Coordinator

February 28, 2014
Hartford, CT

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

My name is Louis Burch, Government Relations Liaison for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Supported by over 80,000 members in Connecticut and New York State, CCE works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment. CCE would like to offer the following testimony in conditional support of House Bill 5288:

HB 5288- AAC Chemical Road Treatments (CONDITIONALLY SUPPORTIVE)

Chemical road treatments are a common method of snow and ice prevention on many local and state roadways. These chemicals, while they may be a useful tool for maintaining safe driving conditions, must be evaluated, giving careful consideration to the impacts they may have on shared water resources and the environment.

Liquid salt brines and other chemical treatments can run off of roadways, especially during wet weather events. This runoff can contaminate soil and water resources, have deleterious effects on wildlife populations and severely corrode roads and infrastructure. A careful analysis of the products used for ice prevention and dust control is needed to ensure that the chemicals we introduce to our environment are not having unforeseen impacts on critical water resources and wildlife habitat.

Chemical products used for ice prevention can include sodium chloride (table salt), magnesium chloride, ammonium nitrate, propylene glycol and calcium magnesium acetate. These chemicals can have costly impacts on our infrastructure and environment. For example, chemicals with the suffix "chloride" have properties that are corrosive to the steel used in cars, trucks and reinforced concrete. Acetates are known to weaken the bond between asphalt binder and their aggregates. Other chemicals can be acutely toxic to plants and aquatic life. Acetates, in particular, can reduce the dissolved oxygen content in surface water resources, contributing to hypoxic conditions and putting stress on aquatic species.

CCE supports the concept behind this legislation, to require the Commissioner of Transportation to conduct an analysis of road spreading agents, and make recommendations to state government about which are the safest products for meeting our maintenance needs. However, as written, this legislation places a disproportionate focus on the integrity of vehicles and infrastructure. CCE urges the committee to amend the bill to specify that environmental impacts will include, but are certainly not limited to, surface waters, farmland, and wildlife. Furthermore, we recommend that this bill include fracking brine in the definition of chemical road treatments.

On behalf of our members in Connecticut, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and look forward to working with you on this important issue.