

**Appropriations Committee
March 2, 2015
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Budget Public Hearing**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Dawn McKay. I work for the State of Connecticut as an Environmental Analyst in the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and I am testifying today as a member of CSEA SEIU Local 2001.

I have worked for the state for 27 years. I have seen this legislative body invest in clean water, clean air and protect some of the most pristine and fragile areas of the state. These investments are paying dividends with cleaner air, more drinkable water, green renewable energy and the protection of unique and important conservation lands.

As a union member I applaud your legislative efforts to protect our environment. I appreciate your continued investment in energy and wildlife conservation that creates a clean, safe place for us to live. But I am concerned that those efforts will fall short without adequate resources. As you review the Governors proposed budget your increased investment in our Agency has never been more critical.

In my opinion one of our biggest challenges at our agency is that we do not have enough workers to allow us to carry out the mission. We have fallen below critical numbers. When a worker retires or leaves they are not replaced. This has been the standard for more than a decade. The culture present today in politics demands reductions in government spending and lean government but this has taken a destructive turn at our agency. We are shrunken, withered, under-functioning and under duress.

When a worker leaves our agency one of two scenarios happens: either the remaining workers are forced to take on more programs or the program is declared dead. The first approach often results in "program failure" since workers can only make progress on so many things at once. It is very common for some workers at our agency to juggle four, five or even six separate programs that impact environmental policy. These workers are overwhelmed merely scratching the surface of what needs to be accomplished. Essentially the staff is spread so thin that it is race for quantity over quality and that makes for sub-par policy implementation.

The second (and more common) scenario when a worker leaves is that the program they worked in is abandoned. Left for dead, these environmental programs no longer exist. Sometimes critical programs that were created by this legislative body simply disappear, as there is no one left to do the work. This often leads to a public outcry. The public wants clean air, water and a safe place to live. Don't we all?

We believe in public service. We believe in being good environmental stewards and leading by example. We believe that the taxpayers of our state deserve a clean, protected and sustainable environment. We want to accomplish all you set before us as a legislative body.

However, this important work is at risk as our agency has shrunken to below critical numbers of positions. With withering resources we are forced to use more temporary workers to fill deep fissures in our agency structure. We are forced to collapse critical programs. We are forced to abandon crucial policies that this legislative body has declared important. I ask you to invest in our agency to keep Connecticut a place where we value clean, protected places to live. And you can do this by providing us the adequate resources to do our work. Thank you.

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