

HB 5733 AN ACT REQUIRING THE STATE TREASURER TO DIVEST FUNDS FROM FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES

Dear Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, and Members of the Committee:

Connecticut is already and will continue to experience severe financial distress over the next few decades due to climate change. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2013 Fifth Synthesis reports that New England in particular will suffer from more extreme precipitation events. It should be noted that the IPCC is made up of hundreds of scientists, and any report they release must be done with *every* statement receiving 100% agreement from *all* participating countries. Line by line, there must be unanimous agreement.

While we wait for sea rise to affect high-cost infrastructure, such as rebuilding of our ports and regional low-lying airport facilities, and water warming to affect water intake operations at Millstone Power Plant, we are already experiencing damage and costs associated with climate change.

This problem goes beyond the easily recognized storm surge damage, flood wall repair, snow maintenance and road repair, tree removal and insurance industry losses that the three recent 100 year storms have brought. In my own town, farmers experience crop reduction and loss due to inability to plant during the spring season in saturated fields, as well as rotting and flooding prior to harvest. Chemical and sewage run-off into the Long Island Sound is due to increase, impacting fishing and recreational industries.

Unfortunately, our current state energy policy that expands the use of natural gas will be exacerbating this problem, as the IPCC also reports that fugitive emissions of raw methane are 87 times more potent in global warming potential (GWP) than carbon dioxide during the first 20 years of release, 36 times more potent when considered over 100 years. The EPA is currently using the outdated figure that methane has 20 times more GWP than carbon dioxide over 100 years. Emerging science is also showing that fugitive methane emissions are higher than currently being estimated by the EPA, and the amount of carbon dioxide that will be released by switching from coal or diesel to natural gas, in combination with these fugitive raw emissions, will keep us on a path of warming beyond 2 degrees celsius. Both industry and political leadership efforts to block emission controls or weaken regulations are compounded by the fact that if/when regulations are enacted, government will not be able to finance adequate inspection and compliance efforts to assure these regulations are followed.

CT taxpayers will be paying for massive gas infrastructure build-out for decades to come, and when reasonable progress is made toward renewable energy, the companies that will have stranded assets will most likely sue for compensation. The financial risks of investing in fossil fuels go beyond pipeline & other infrastructure, as fossil fuel companies will also have stranded assets with regards to the oil, gas & coal reserves that will be required to be left untapped.

I urge the passage of this bill to discourage the increased use of fossil fuels and put us on a more appropriate path of 100% renewable energy. We have the technology now to convert to a combined solar, wind and small-scale hydro power with the use of community financed micro-grids. I would rather pay for this investment now, one that will provide green job growth and recoup its costs over time, than one that will ultimately be stranded and contribute to global warming and climate change costs to our state.

Please see the below link to read more about risks of fossil fuel investment. Pages 91-96 of this compendium has a list of reports compiled through December 2014 that relate to “Inflated Estimates of Oil & Gas Reserves and Profitability” and “Disclosure of Serious Risks to Investors”

Concerned Health Professionals of New York. (2014, December 11). Compendium of scientific, medical, and media findings demonstrating risks and harms of fracking (unconventional gas and oil extraction) (2nd ed.). <http://concernedhealthny.org/compendium/>.

Thank you for considering this testimony,

Jennifer Siskind

South Glastonbury, CT