



**Testimony to the CGA Environment Committee
Testimony by Louis W. Burch
Citizens Campaign for the Environment**

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Hartford, CT**

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, distinguished vice chairs and other esteemed members of the CGA Energy and Technology Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on these important issues.

My name is Louis Burch and I represent 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. We would like to offer the following testimony:

SB 231- AAC Pollinator Health (SUPPORT WITH RECCOMENDATIONS)

There is growing scientific and anecdotal evidence that neonicotinoid (also known as *neonics*) pesticides are a major contributor to the recent decline in pollinator health, including bees, across our state and the nation. Neonics are systemic pesticides, meaning that they are either absorbed through the roots or engineered directly into the seeds, making the plant itself (and its pollen) toxic to insects and other organisms. These pesticides are used broadly for agricultural purposes, as well as on ornamental plants and trees.

Neonicotinoid pesticides can persist in the soil months and in some circumstances, even years after being applied. At high doses, neonics can be lethal to bees and other pollinators, while causing difficulties in navigation and foraging, and impacting the immune system at sub-lethal levels. CCE strongly supports efforts to reduce the use of neonicotinoid pesticides while simultaneously advancing efforts to study and support healthy pollinator habitats. SB 231 is a good step in the right direction, by classifying neonics as a restricted use pesticide, thus prohibiting neonics for general use. While this is a step in the right direction, the bill needs clarification and strengthening in order to maximize the intended benefit of this legislation. Specifically, CCE would like to offer the following recommendations:

1. Sec. 2 prohibits the application of neonics on linden or basswood trees in Connecticut. This is an important measure to protect honeybees, although a scientific process is needed to access what other plants are supportive of other pollinators (including but not limited to beetles, flies, moths, butterflies and hummingbirds) and thus should be included in this prohibition.

2. Sec. 4 prohibits the use of neonics for any use *except* for agricultural or horticultural purposes during the blooming season. A clear and precise definition must be developed for “agricultural and horticultural purposes,” to ensure that it is not interpreted as a vague requirement that allows the use of neonics when it is not warranted.

Additionally, “blooming season” is defined as the period of a calendar year in which blooming or flowering plants are actively blooming, including, but not limited to, the period between March 1 and October 31. As the impacts of climate change continue to take hold, this legislation must take into account that many plants have developed irregular blooming cycles, and that pollinators may in fact be feeding on pollinating plants outside of the March 1 – October 31 period. Due to an expanded pollinator feeding season, as well as the systematic nature and long term persistence of neonics, restrictions on neonic use should be extended through the full calendar year.

3. Sec. 5 establishes a task force to study issues relating to pollinator health and lays out the details of how each member of the task force will be appointed. Under the current language, the majority of appointees to the task force will be named by leaders of the CT General Assembly, as well as the Commissioners of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Dept. of Agriculture, and the Director of the Ag Experiment Station. With the exception of the three agency heads, all appointees are political appointments with no requirement for technical or scientific expertise. CCE strongly urges the Committee to amend language to require the appointment of experts with scientific credentials and/or professional expertise related to issues surrounding pollinators, pesticide use, and non-toxic land management.

In conclusion, CCE supports SB 231 and applauds the committee for raising this important food security issue. Pollinators are a critical part of our food web and are in need of swift action to restrict the use of toxic neonicotinoid pesticides, bolster pollinator habitats, and educate state agencies, policy makers, industry, and the public on issues affecting pollinator health. We respectfully urge you to strengthen provisions of the bill and pass this important legislation as soon as possible.

SB 226- AAC Single-Use Carryout Bags (CONDITIONALLY SUPPORTIVE)

It is estimated that Connecticut residents consume more than 400 million single use-plastic shopping bags on an annual basis. Plastic bags are unnecessary and pose a threat to the environment, especially to wildlife and marine species that may come in contact with them. Manufacturing and shipping paper bags require even more energy and water use, and create more pollution than plastic bags.

CCE supports the intent of SB 226, as it acknowledges the adverse environmental impacts that come from widespread consumption of single-use shopping bags, and takes steps to begin reducing the use of single use plastic and paper bags. However, the legislation does not go far enough to reduce disposable bag use, as numerous municipalities and nations across the globe have already successfully accomplished. As has been demonstrated in dozens of municipalities across the U.S., the only proven effective way to reduce bag consumption is with a fee on checkout bags or a complete phase-out. A fee on bags would be particularly useful in Connecticut, as it would not only reduce bag use, but it could also generate a short term revenue stream to help support much needed environmental protection programs.

CCE supports efforts to minimize risks to our environment by reducing the consumption of single-use shopping bags in Connecticut, and urges this committee to strengthen this legislation, either by attaching a fee to every single-use bag, or by introducing a timeline to phase out the free giveaway of disposable bags altogether.

SB 232- AAC the Recycling of Consumer Household Batteries (OPPOSED)

CCE supports an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) model for recycling household consumer batteries and other batteries in our state. Unfortunately, SB 232 is not an EPR bill and is unworkable in the real world. CCE, the CT Product Stewardship Council, and the battery manufacturers have been collaborating to find a reasonable and effective solution to battery recycling for Connecticut, and are deeply dismayed by the failure of this committee to incorporate those efforts into the recycling bill before us today.

Household batteries contain a myriad of hazardous materials, which carry the potential to contaminate land and water resources, posing significant adverse health risks to humans. To address this threat, CT must create a comprehensive recycling program for all household consumer batteries. Instead, the proposed legislation simply adds household batteries to Connecticut's curbside recycling program, effectively putting the costs of battery recycling on haulers and municipal recycling authorities. Ultimately, this means that the expenses associated with collecting and recycling batteries would fall on the taxpayers of our state.

In addition, most materials recovery facilities are not equipped to separate or manage the hazardous components contained in household batteries. The costs of the upgrades needed to retrofit these facilities to manage that waste stream would almost certainly make the provisions of this bill impossible to implement. EPR programs are effective because they make recycling convenient for the average consumer, allow for the best available use of recycled materials, and incentivize the use of more environmentally friendly components by manufacturers. By transferring the cost of recycling onto taxpayers, the benefits of battery recycling are severely diminished, leading to increased costs for municipal recyclers as well as low compliance rates. These factors ultimately result in increased municipal waste management costs and adverse impacts to our environment.

CCE respectfully urges the Environment Committee to work with the CT Product Stewardship Council, environmental groups, and other battery stakeholders to put forward a battery recycling program similar to Connecticut's other EPR programs, such as our e-waste recycling program. A good battery recycling program would cover both primary and rechargeable batteries, as well as medical devices, toys, and other products that contain batteries, and it would hold the battery industry responsible for the costs associated with administering the program. Additionally, the plan should include formulaic collection standards based on population, as well performance standards requiring the best possible use of recycled materials.

In conclusion, CCE opposes SB 232 and urges this committee to work with stakeholders to develop an effective and workable EPR program battery recycling in Connecticut. EPR is a critical component of Connecticut's solid waste management strategy and should be extended to provide for the safe and convenient collection and recycling of household consumer batteries in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony, CCE appreciates the Environment Committee's willingness to raise these important topics and look forward to working with the committee on these issues moving forward.