

Testimony of Tom Swan, Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG)

Before the Environment Committee

On HB 7247, SB 996, SB 998, and HB 6329

March 13, 2017

Representative Demicco, Senator Kennedy, Senator Miner and other members of the Environment Committee my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG). I am testifying on behalf of our thousands of member families across the state.

The first bill I want to speak on is HB 7247 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CARBON PRICE FOR FOSSIL FUELS SOLD IN CONNECTICUT. CCAG applauds your leadership in raising this bill and we want to express our willingness to work with you on refining it going forward. Climate change is the greatest threat to humankind (although one could argue the Trump presidency is, but they are not necessarily exclusive of one another). There is no debate amongst the scientific community CO2 emissions caused by humans are the leading contributor to climate disruption and the impacts are already devastating. For too long oil companies and other leading emitters of CO2 have been able to externalize the cost of their destroying our environment and health to the rest of us. This proposal begins to acknowledge these costs and is a thoughtful approach to end the unfair subsidies to these industries in a manner that is equitable for consumers and businesses. The calls for urgent action are getting louder and at the center of these is putting a price on carbon. Even former Exxon CEO and current Trump Secretary of State voicing support for a carbon fee.

Connecticut has a long history of being a leader in protecting the environment in a bi-partisan manner. The need for our leadership has never been so urgent and this bill is an excellent opportunity to step forward and build on our legacy. We urge you to move this concept forward.

The next bill I would like to testify on is SB 996 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BOTTLE RECYCLING FEE IN LIEU OF A REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT. CCAG strongly opposes this bill. We should be looking to strengthen the very successful bottle bill by increasing the amount of the deposit and expanding what is covered. Weakening our commitment to a cleaner environment as is outlined in this bill is the exact wrong thing for us to do.

Speaking of wrong things to do, where did SB 998 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SOLICITATION OF HIGH-PRIORITY REGULATORY CONCERNS BY THE COMMISSIONER OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FROM A STATE-WIDE BUSINESS ORGANIZATION come from? It reads like it may have come directly from the Koch Brothers or Scott Pruitt's emails from polluters. There are plenty of opportunities for all interests to petition agencies, and especially the legislature, to revisit different regulations.

The final bill I will testify on today is HB 6329 AN ACT CONCERNING HYDRAULIC FRACTURING WASTE IN CONNECTICUT. Since the legislature passed a moratorium three years ago, it has become more widely accepted that the bi-products of hydraulic fracking are extremely dangerous. There is no reason Connecticut should allow ourselves to become the dumping ground for these wastes and therefore we support a ban.