

Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly's
Energy & Technology Committee

on

Proposed Senate Bill 106, *An Act Concerning Zero-Carbon Generating Facilities
and Achieving Connecticut's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mandated Levels*

by

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Co-chairs Reed, Winfield, Formica, ranking member Hoydick and members of the Energy & Technology Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Proposed Senate Bill 106, *An Act Concerning Zero-Carbon Generating Facilities and Achieving Connecticut's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mandated Levels*. My name is Dr. Stephen M. Coan, Ph.D. and I am President and CEO for Mystic Aquarium. I am here today to express Mystic Aquarium's support for Proposed Senate Bill 106.

I. Mystic Aquarium

Sea Research Foundation Inc., d/b/a Mystic Aquarium, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, is counted among the nation's leading aquariums. Since its founding in 1973, Mystic Aquarium has been a leader in global efforts to protect our ocean planet, while advancing the science of marine animal care. In the past 43 years, the Aquarium has hosted more than 20 million visitors, provided direct educational programs for over 2 million children and adults, published more than 200 scientific reports, and pioneered the care, display and study of thousands of species of marine life. Each year, Mystic Aquarium generates over \$75 million in economic impact, hosting more than 700,000 visitors from all walks of life to explore its 4,000 resident animals — including fish and invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and marine mammals. An iconic destination for families, Mystic Aquarium promotes a strong conservation ethic through its exhibits, animal presentations and programs, and instills a strong sense of environmental stewardship in children and adults alike.

The mission of Mystic Aquarium is to inspire people to care for and protect our ocean planet through conservation, education, and research. Mystic Aquarium is firmly committed to engaging students and the community at large to discover and learn about the wonders of our ocean planet.

**II. Proposed Senate Bill 106, An Act Concerning Zero-Carbon Generating Facilities
and Achieving Connecticut's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mandated Levels**

As a non-profit in Connecticut, we care deeply about the cost of electricity. Its high costs are one of our operating challenges. Last year, the Connecticut Senate passed legislation that would have created a competitive process overseen by the state to reduce retail electric rates. The measure was not acted on in the House. This committee should revisit this legislation this year.

First, the legislation is consumer friendly energy policy. Connecticut has pursued multiple competitive processes to serve retail consumers directly. However, to date, these solicitations have been limited in scope. They have only allowed Natural Gas, Large-Scale Hydro and Class I Renewable resources the ability to compete. This does not make sense. If Connecticut wants the lowest-cost, longest-term resource that also meets their environmental and economic goals, this solicitation process has to be expanded. Broadening the list to include nuclear power, among others, will encourage more competition and lower costs. That will benefit my non-profit and all consumers alike.

The legislature, and this committee in particular, deserves credit for last year's legislation and the construct of what was proposed. The concept from last year was simple. It was a competitive process to derive low cost retail electricity. Moreover, the legislative language mandated that the overseers of the solicitation, the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP), the Attorney General's Office, the Office of the Consumer Counsel and the Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA) could only proceed with selecting a winning bid if it was determined to be in ratepayers' interest. As a non-profit this provides me with comfort and certainty knowing I will be protected. This is smart policy and good consumer protection. In essence the legislation is a tool to try and get more cost effective retail electricity. However, if the state regulators do not think that is being accomplished, the state is not mandated to act.

Adding additional resources to compete, like nuclear power, will help reduce costs. On a personal note, I hope Dominion's Millstone Power Station competes hard and wins. My non-profit is a partner of theirs. For years, Dominion has supported Mystic Aquarium's conservation education program; allowing us to connect students to their local environment and generate public awareness around protecting our oceans.

This competitively designed legislation requires no state or local subsidies and gives Dominion a chance to sell Millstone's power directly to Connecticut consumers. If they are the selected bidder, Connecticut will enjoy all of Millstone's carbon-free attributes and the economic impacts that the station brings too. As a non-profit, I know the benefits are many. Millstone produces over \$1.5 billion annually in economic benefits for Connecticut. Why would we risk losing that by preventing them the opportunity to compete to sell directly to Connecticut consumers?

For Connecticut's consumers, and especially the non-profit sector, please pass this competitive legislation that will benefit ratepayers regardless who the winning bid is.

Thank you.