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Testimony In Support of H.B. 5363

Establishing a carbon fee on fossil fuels

By John C. Hall

Executive Director

It is indisputable that the burning of fossil fuels world-wide over the past 150 years has resulted in climate impacts that affect storms, ice sheet melting, sea level, human famine, refugee migration, wars, and ecological disruptions that resonate through the biosphere. Human responsibility for these changes demands human action to ameliorate the damage they cause.

The State of Connecticut has established a goal of reducing carbon emissions by 80% by the year 2050. Given the weak responses to climate change to date, by state, federal, and private entities, it is difficult to see how this goal can be met or how the most damaging consequences of climate change can be avoided without major political initiatives and strong incentive programs to reduce the use of fossil fuels. The costs of climate change itself, in the form of storm damage, refugee migration, famine, and related military campaigns, are already apparent and growing in magnitude.

In light of these factors, I am writing to support legislation that would authorize the State of Connecticut to institute a carbon price or fee for emissions caused by the use of fossil fuels within our state for transportation, electricity generation, building heating and cooling, and all other purposes. This carbon price would provide some incentive to lower fossil fuel consumption in favor of less carbon-intensive sources of energy.

Such a fee would also provide needed revenue to support other measures needed to make our society more energy efficient. The home heating oil industry, for example, has successfully lobbied against such a tax for too long, given heating oil an unfair advantage over other energy sources, including natural gas which is assigned public benefit charges. Our state's gasoline tax has remained constant for many years, and the improved efficiency of cars has deprived the state of badly needed revenue that could be applied to our transportation system to achieve greater efficiencies in that area.

Thank you for your consideration in support of H.B. 5363

Our mission: to foster sustainable relationships among people, other creatures, energy resources, and the environment and to promote interdisciplinary community partnerships in scientific, artistic, and other cultural endeavors.