



Testimony of Environment Connecticut State Director Chris Phelps  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee

March 14, 2018

Regarding:

Supporting - S.B. 7, AAC Climate Change Planning And Resiliency

Supporting – H.B. 5363, An Act Establishing A Carbon Price For Fossil Fuels Sold In Connecticut

Supporting – S.B. 109, AAC The Protection Of Connecticut’s Water, Air, And Natural Resources

Opposing – S.B. 427, AAC Public Trust Components Of The State Water Plan

Senator Kennedy, Senator Miner, Representative Demicco, and members of the Environment Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments regarding multiple bills on your agenda today.

**S.B. 7, AAC Climate Change Planning And Resiliency**

Climate change threatens the economy, public health, and quality of life in every Connecticut community. The lack of serious federal government to combat climate change under President Trump, creates all the more urgency for states like Connecticut to provide real leadership cutting pollution.

Public Act 08-98, the Connecticut Global Warming Solutions Act, established mandatory greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for Connecticut of 20 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80 percent below 2001 levels by 2050. In order to achieve the 2050 reduction target, Connecticut needs to hold itself accountable to meeting stringent, science-based interim targets. By establishing a target of 45 percent below 2001 levels by 2030, S.B. 7 would help put Connecticut on a path to meeting its climate commitments.

We also generally support the proposed establishment of the Connecticut Council on Climate Change in the bill. However, we respectfully suggest that the language be modified to specify that membership of this council should include no less than two members representing nongovernmental organizations with expertise in climate science and public policies mitigating

global warming and climate change. Additionally, we suggest that the Council should be required to meet no less than twice per year.

Lastly, we strongly support S.B. 7's proposed inclusion and consideration of the state's climate commitments in the Comprehensive Energy Strategy by renaming it the "Comprehensive Climate and Energy Strategy," and requiring the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to incorporate the state's short, mid, and long-term climate commitments into its short-term energy planning.

### **H.B. 5363, An Act Establishing A Carbon Price For Fossil Fuels Sold In Connecticut**

Environment Connecticut supports the goal of this bill to establish a "carbon price" fee on fossil fuels sold in the state. We respectfully suggest that the proposal should ensure that it compliments existing climate policies such as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and Clean Car tailpipe emissions standards. It should also be structured to allocate a significant portion of the revenue generated by such a fee to investments supporting new zero-carbon renewable energy, energy storage, and efficiency technologies that can accelerate the shift off of fossil fuels and towards a 100% renewable energy goal for the state. We also recommend that the remaining revenue generated be directed to individual Connecticut residents based upon family income and need, with higher payments provided to lower and middle income recipients.

### **S.B. 109, AAC The Protection Of Connecticut's Water, Air, And Natural Resources**

This bill would require the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to report to the General Assembly on "the need to increase fines for water, air, and natural resource pollution..."

For many years, our organization has been concerned by the high number of Connecticut entities routinely violating environmental permits, such as water pollution discharge permits, without incurring any significant penalties. For example, in 2016 we joined our colleagues at Toxics Action Center in bringing a lawsuit against a facility in Glastonbury, CT that had a years-long history of serious violations of their water pollution discharge permit. Despite that record of flagrant violations, DEEP had failed to take action to impose penalties on the facility. After we filed a lawsuit under the Clean Water Act, the company chose to engage in mediation and ultimately settled the lawsuit, paid significant financial penalties, and agreed to take timely action to cease their permit violations.

The fact that stopping this flagrant polluter who was known to DEEP required legal intervention by our organization illustrates the urgent need to assess and strengthen both DEEP's enforcement capacity and the financial penalties assessed for environmental violations.

This article from 2017 discusses this problem with additional detail:

<http://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-companies-pollutants-exceed-limits-20170330-story.html>

**S.B. 427, AAC Public Trust Components Of The State Water Plan**

S.B. 427 appears to be intended to exclude water from "private drinking wells" from the public trust. Approximately 1 in 4 Connecticut residents receives their drinking water from private wells. S.B. 427 would weaken protections for these water supplies, which are already inadequately protected in state statute. Environment Connecticut strongly opposes this proposal and urges the committee to reject it.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding the legislation listed above.

Sincerely,

Chris Phelps  
Environment Connecticut State Director