



Public Hearing – March 14, 2018
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert J. Klee

Senate Bill 7 – AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE PLANNING AND RESILIENCY

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding SB 7.

Connecticut has a long, proud history of bold leadership and action on climate change that was initiated over a decade ago when the General Assembly adopted the Global Warming Solution Act (GWSA). The GWSA requires the state to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80 percent below 2001 levels by 2050. The 2050 target was set based on the overwhelming scientific consensus that to avert the dangerous impacts of climate change we must limit the global average temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius. Achieving an 80 percent reduction in GHG emissions by 2050 ensures we stay on track to avoid a warming of 2 degrees Celsius or more.

The state has made much progress in achieving both its short and long-term targets by pursuing policies, regulations, and programs that lead to meaningful GHG reductions. Examples of such progress include increasing the amount electricity generated from zero-carbon resources such as wind, solar, and hydro; adopting California's motor vehicle GHG standards, low-emission vehicle and zero-emission vehicle regulations; and doubling our investments in energy efficiency.

Connecticut has also been a leader on resiliency and climate adaptation, particularly in the wake of the severe storms of 2011 and 2012. Building on the recommendations of the Two Storm Panel and the legislative Shoreline Task Force, the state focused its attention on electric system resiliency and flooding in the coastal zone and inland floodplains. This led to the first-in-the-nation statewide microgrid program for critical infrastructure, and the creation of the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaption (CIRCA) – a collaboration of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and UConn. Connecticut also was a winner of the Sandy-funded Natural Disaster Resiliency Competition for an innovative project in Bridgeport that enhances both resilience and transit oriented development.

The Governor and I believe now is the time – this legislative session – to once again prioritize climate change by (1) implementing a planning framework to ensure the state continues to make progress to achieve our climate change goals; (2) integrating our climate and energy policies and planning efforts; and (3) finding ways to adapt to our already changed climate and make our communities more resilient in the face of projected sea level rise. These are the key elements included in Senate Bill 7, which, along with the clean energy provisions of SB 9, will ensure Connecticut's leadership role in addressing all aspects of climate change.

All of us should feel an obligation to future generations to take action to address the very real threat of climate change.

Ensuring Continuous Progress in Meeting Climate Goals

Connecticut must continue to pursue opportunities to cost-effectively reduce statewide emissions. Recognizing the importance of ensuring we stay on a path to achieve our 2050 target, Governor Dannel P. Malloy, through Executive Order No. 46, established the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3), tasking them to "establish interim goals that, if met, will ensure that the state will achieve the 2050 target."¹

Since commencing its first meeting in July 2015, the GC3 has focused its attention on evaluating mid-term targets in the range of 35-55 percent below 2001 levels by 2030. This evaluation process included input from stakeholders at the publically held meetings, submission of written comments, and multiple stakeholder engagement events held throughout the state.²

After a thorough review of a variety of mitigation scenarios that drive down greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the electric, building, and transportation sectors, the GC3, through consensus, recommended an economy-wide **greenhouse gas emission reduction target of 45 percent below 2001 levels by 2030**.³ This mid-term reduction target will place Connecticut on a linear downward trajectory from today's GHG emissions to the 80 percent reduction from 2001 levels by 2050 required by the Global Warming Solutions Act. SB 7 enshrines this goal in statute.

To help ensure steady progress in meeting GWSA goals, SB 7 proposes that as a permanent body, the **Connecticut Council on Climate Change** will facilitate and coordinate GHG reduction efforts among state agencies, businesses, municipalities and nongovernmental organizations. Meeting at least twice a year, the Council will monitor climate science and the state's progress in meeting its greenhouse gas reduction targets, review existing policies, statutes, ordinances and regulations, and recommend additional measures that help to ensure the state is on a path to achieve its targets.

Integrating Climate and Energy Planning

Because energy accounts for 93 percent of Connecticut's greenhouse gas emissions, any effort to reduce emissions and mitigate climate change must be consistently integrated into the state's energy planning efforts. By incorporating climate change mitigation into the Integrated Resources Plan (IRP) and Comprehensive Energy Strategy (CES), the state's primary energy planning instruments, the state can more effectively integrate solutions that achieve sustainable, secure, and affordable energy for its residents and businesses. This streamlined approach to energy and climate planning will also create synergistic benefits for public health, the environment, and the economy making Connecticut a desired place to live and work.

Connecticut has already successfully demonstrated that reducing GHG emissions goes hand in hand with economic growth and job creation. Transitioning to a clean energy economy will further strengthen the state's economic growth, creating jobs and lowering energy bills for families and businesses.

¹ Executive Order Number 46 http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/climatechange/gc3/executive_order_46.pdf

² GC3 archive of meetings, reports, and events
http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=4423&q=568878&deepNav_GID=2121

³ For GC3 consensus principles that accompany the recommendation, see
http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=4423&Q=568878&deepNav_GID=2121

Resiliency and Planning for Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding

Pursuant to Public Act 13-179, CIRCA, a partnership between DEEP and UConn, is responsible for updating sea level change scenarios. CIRCA recommends that the state plan for a scenario of 50 centimeters – almost 20 inches - of sea level rise (SLR) by 2050. DEEP proposes multiple statutory changes to ingrain this projection in statute to guide planning and decision-making, and ensure that future CIRCA projections are the basis for future planning.

CIRCA's current projection of 50 cm of sea level rise in Long Island Sound by the year 2050 is not a prediction, nor does it represent a mean value or likely outcome. Instead, the scenario establishes a reasonable upper bound for the purposes of adaptation planning, and by enacting SB 7, state and local agencies will employ it as a prudent, consistent benchmark for evaluating community resilience along Connecticut's coast.

Several provisions of the bill (sections 1, 5-9, 11, 14-15) modify and update existing state and local land use planning authorities to incorporate a consistent statutory reference to sea level rise. Specifically:

- Section 1 of SB 7 applies the CIRCA projection to municipal plans of Conservation and Development;
- Section 5 applies the projection to updates of the State Plan of Conservation and Development, and emphasizes that flood hazards and greenhouse gas reduction goals should also be considered;
- Sections 6, 7, and 8 incorporate the CIRCA projection into the definition of "coastal hazard areas" and "rise in sea level" for the purposes of state and local coastal management. This will inform, but not dictate, the local land use planning and decision-making process;
- Similarly, section 9 creates a process for municipalities to incorporate areas subject to flooding under the CIRCA projection into the defined coastal boundary for the purpose of coastal site plan review. This will not create any new regulatory process nor will it impose any regulatory restrictions, but will provide our coastal towns with the tools necessary to address adaptation and resilience concerns in areas formerly not subject to Coastal Management Act policies;
- Section 11 references the CIRCA scenario in Clean Water Fund grant projects, so that sewage treatment plants and other infrastructure will be made more resilient against future hazards;
- Section 12 also reflects state government leading by example, in requiring an additional two feet (instead of the current one foot) of freeboard above the Base Flood Elevation for state-funded projects. This elevation requirement is meant to account for the current CIRCA scenario, and will add additional elevation based on future revisions of the scenario;
- Sections 14 and 15 apply the scenario to municipal evacuation or hazard mitigation plans and to the state civil preparedness plan and program, respectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact DEEP's legislative liaison, Lee Sawyer at 860-424-3332 or Lee.Sawyer@ct.gov.