

Testimony Regarding

SB 07; An Act Concerning Climate Change Planning and Resiliency, H. B. 5363 An Act Concerning Establishing a Carbon Price for Fossil Fuels Sold in Connecticut. And SB 345, An Act Concerning Climate Change Education in Connecticut Schools.

Environmental Committee

March 14th, 2018

Dear Senators Kennedy, Flexer, Miner, and other members of the Environmental Committee.

My name is Justice Konowe, I am a resident of New Milford Connecticut and a graduate student at UCONN's School of Social Work. I am here today to stand in support of SB 07, H.B. No. 5363 and SB 345. I am especially supportive of taking immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emission in the state of Connecticut- ultimately achieving 100% renewable energy, as well as educating our youth on the most accurate science behind - as well as the *impacts of* climate change.

Some, even those within my own profession, have asked me why climate change is important to me as a social worker? My argument is that climate change is human rights issue. I am currently doing my internship with the United Nations- advocating for the rights of those impacted by climate change. The greenhouse gas emission that come from the fossil fuel dependency of Connecticut and the United States as a whole, impact every human on the planet. Evidence of climate change can be seen in the sub-Sahara region of Africa, experiencing severe drought, creating famine, and economic insecurities in the region. It can be seen in the South Pacific small island nations facing rising sea levels and experiencing salination of their drinking water and soil causing the forced migration of those whose home is no longer inhabitable. It can be seen in our own country facing erratic weather patterns causing the increased occurrence of category 5 hurricanes and devastating forest fires. According to a 2017 Greenpeace report, an average of 25.4 million people are displaced every year as a consequence of natural disasters. In each case, those who are most vulnerable- women, children, the elderly, and the poor are impacted by these effects at a disproportionately higher rate than those in a position of privilege. This is why climate change is a social work issue- it is a *Human issue*.

I believe that the first step to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions is to invest in renewable energy. SB 07 Calls for the states to assess energy resources and identify the most "cost effective" means of meeting the states greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. I urge the commit to consider that solar and wind energy initiatives may be costlier up front- but the long-term implications of investing in renewable energy and resolving to save our environment is priceless. We need to do what is necessary to reach 100% renewable energy by 2035.

These initiatives will also bring jobs and new economic opportunities to the state. According a cost-benefits analysis done by the EDR Group, the lifetime benefits of renewable energy programs are greater than its cost. This report showed that these programs will produce increased business sales, Gross State Product, Jobs, and after-tax earned income, all of which our state desperately needs.

Since the US has pulled out of the Paris Agreement, we as a state have the opportunity, and perhaps even responsibility, to act as leaders in the responding to climate change and showing the world what Americans truly stand for by shifting to a more sustainable lifestyle and economy as well as educating future generation to do the same.

Thank you for your time and attention today.

Sources:

<https://www.edrgroup.com/library/energy-environment/connecticut-clean-energy-program.html>

<https://www.greenpeace.de/sites/www.greenpeace.de/files/20170524-greenpeace-studie-climate-change-migration-displacement-engl.pdf>