March 6, 2018

Co-Chair Gary Winfield  
Co-Chair Lonnie Reed  
Co-Chair Paul Formica

Energy and Technology Committee:

My name is John Bowman, representing F. F. Hitchcock Company in Cheshire, Connecticut. I am here to ask this committee to reconsider the language in House Bill No. 5348 AN ACT MAKING USEFUL THERMAL ENERGY GENERATED FROM BIODIESEL A CLASS I RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE AND CREATING A HOMEOWNER-GENERATED USEFUL THERMAL ENERGY PROGRAM.

As a chemistry and environmental studies student at Merrimack College in the Fall of 2006 I received a phone call from my dad. During the call and amid some small talk he asked as only a father could something along the lines of “with all of the goofing off that you are doing up there, do you know anything about biodiesel.” Admittedly I remember nothing coming to mind but when you are talking to the man paying your tuition I decided to think quickly and googled it. A few formulas came up on the screen and instantly at least in his mind I was a biodiesel expert. The reason for his asking was he had just been hired to construct a biodiesel processing facility in Cheshire and the only thing he knew was that it was a brand new technology. Over the next few weeks and many phone calls later he continued to fill me in on some of the plans and eventually during winter break I decided to forgo my spring semester and decided it was a technology I didn’t want to miss out on.

It was February of 2007 and I along with approximately 3,500 others arrived in San Antonio, Texas for the National Biodiesel Conference. This was an industry that was just about to get started. We were also ready to get started, plans were finalized and over the next year we worked to build a biodiesel manufacturing facility. I was hired on to the project and alongside my duties helping to construct the project I was being trained to run the facility as its operations manager. In March of 2008 the company abruptly closed its doors. Over the course of the next few years the facility was acquired by my family. Since that time period it has sat idle.

Upon the suspension of the project and with me losing my job running the unfinished facility we decided to capture a void in the marketplace left by the companies closure and we entered in the fuel oil delivery business in the Fall of 2008. We have grown from one truck to a fleet of many and have expanded our offerings to propane delivery. My days are now busy delivering oil but my mind has still remained stuck on biodiesel.

Over the next few years I consulted on many biodiesel projects throughout New England. I was hired by the local power generation industry in Jamaica to develop a plan to integrate biodiesel in to their energy stream. Their goal was to use biodiesel to gain some energy independence. I was the first person to import biodiesel to the island running trials to blend biodiesel with existing fuel stock on the island for local trucking fleets as a test. We eventually progressed to trial biodiesel in power generation on the
island. There is a future for the industry on the island just like there is a future here in Connecticut. It takes time.

Biodiesel has the potential to be great for the State of Connecticut. I have seen the industry grow across the country; however it is still in its infancy. During this time I have also seen first hand the low points of the industry; with our facility still sitting idle and other facilities in the State of Connecticut abandoned or bankrupt. The current in state production fails in comparison to current and future demand. I think it is great that we have some in state production, truthfully I wish we had a lot more. With advances in technology and an increase in demand I think we will, however we will always need to import biodiesel into this state in order to meet the needs of customers. The history of this body has shown that it is impossible to legislate the biodiesel industry into growth. It has been tried and it has failed. The industry will grow on its own, and the best way to encourage growth is to expand this bill to include all biodiesel regardless of its origin. Create the marketplace and then allow local production to replace imports. Build it and they will come so to speak. Thank you for encouraging the use of biodiesel and thank you for understanding that biodiesel has the potential to be a great fuel for the people of Connecticut, I just ask that you don’t hold it back.

I ask that the Energy and Technology Committee reconsider House Bill No. 5348 AN ACT MAKING USEFUL THERMAL ENERGY GENERATED FROM BIODIESEL A CLASS I RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE AND CREATING A HOMEOWNER-GENERATED USEFUL THERMAL ENERGY PROGRAM to include any imported biodiesel in addition to local production.

Respectfully,

John Bowman