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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

SB 9 AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S ENERGY FUTURE.

DR. ALAN ADDLEY, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Senator Winfield, Senator Formica, Representative Reed, Representative Ackert, and members of the Committee,

I am testifying today to urge you to include expansion of the state's Virtual Net (VNM) program as an important component of Connecticut's energy future. Expanding the capacity allotments on the state's Virtual Net Metering program for municipal customers will allow them to make (and take full advantage of) investments in renewable energy. Expanding the capacity must take place in order to assist the state in meeting our clean energy and climate reduction goals, increase grid reliability, and lower electricity bills. This is even more critical in the current fiscal climate as school districts and municipalities face economic hardships made worse by increasing cuts in state aid.

CT's VNM program allows State, Municipal and Agricultural customers to aggregate savings from the installation of Class I (such as solar or wind) and Class III (co-generation) distributed generation. VNM allows customers who operate behind-the-meter generation to assign surplus production from their generator to other metered building accounts that are not physically connected to the customer's host generator. This is a perfect model to benefit public schools and municipalities who have multiple sites.

With respect to municipalities, this allows the town and school district to reduce its carbon footprint while at the same time creating long-term savings by offsetting electricity costs. It also allows for investment in larger clean energy projects by facilitating, for instance, the construction of a ground solar array rather than simply being limited to rooftop arrays (which could reduce the potential amount of electricity generated and also impede future roof replacement projects).

Recognizing the benefits of the program and the great interest among municipalities in participating, the General Assembly extended the program in 2016 by increasing the cap; however, that allotment was quickly filled and there is still pent-up demand for the program.

Granby Public Schools has been actively pursuing the approval of a VNM Photovoltaic Project which will likely reduce Granby Public Schools' and taxpayers' expenses by \$3.3M over the next 25 years.

The goal of Granby's solar project is to reduce the district's carbon footprint while, at the same time, create long-term savings. The district is fortunate to have the available space to construct a ground array that would serve its four schools by generating 80%-100% of energy needs.

Installing a ground solar array using VNM on the five acres of land adjacent to the district's intermediate school would provide the credits for energy and make a solar solution for the entire district economically feasible and desirable.

The Capital Region Education Council is assisting the district with this innovative project, which is an excellent example of a regionalization effort being promoted by the Legislature. Granby's finances are efficiently and wisely managed and there is joint support for this project from the Board of Education, Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance.

The State of Connecticut Department of Administrative Services and School Construction Grants has voiced its support for this groundbreaking solution which it hopes could be a model for other school districts as they work to reduce their carbon footprint while acting as responsible stewards of the funds provided by both the State of Connecticut and local taxpayers. Approval of this project is especially important in the face of looming cuts to municipal aid. There is no cost to the State.

On behalf of the Granby Board of Education, I have reached out to professional organizations and legislators for their support of the project. As of now, capacity allotments for VNM in the Agriculture and Municipal Programs have been filled and this program has yet to be renewed or extended. Without the VNM component, the financial impact of the project is greatly diminished and will not be worthwhile. Therefore, the Board of Education and I are requesting your active support for this project by including legislative language to either expand or eliminate the current municipal cap on the VNM program so that all municipalities that, like Granby, are willing to make the investment in clean, renewable energy may do so.

Sincerely,



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