



**Testimony of New Neighborhoods, Inc., to
Members of the Energy and Technology Committee regarding
Governor's Senate Bill No. 9, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Energy Future
March 1, 2018**

Senator Looney, Senator Duff, Representative Aresimowicz, Representative Ritter, members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about *Governor's Senate Bill No. 9, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Energy Future*.

My name is Cathleen Miller, and I am the Construction and Asset Manager for New Neighborhoods, Inc. (NNI), a private non-profit developer, owner and manager of affordable housing located in Stamford. I am here today with Andrell Yarbrough, our Interim C.E.O, and we are submitting testimony in support of the passage of this legislation.

Before commenting on the bill, I would like to provide some background about our organization and its mission. As I am sure you are aware, Fairfield County's cost of living is among the highest in the United States; it is telling that waiting lists for most of our properties are closed, which indicates that the projected wait period is 2 years or more. New Neighborhoods has been dedicated to providing affordable housing for over 50 years; our mission is which is founded in the belief that access to affordable housing is central to maintaining healthy communities. NNI owns and manages 444 units of affordable rental housing, which are in addition to several hundred units of affordable ownership housing that it has developed. Affordable housing development and management is HARD. It requires cobbling together of funding packages forged from private and public sources that carry heavy burdens of compliance guidelines and reporting, and it requires diligent stewardship over the assets developed.

Over the past 5 years, NNI has captured opportunities to incorporate energy conservation and green technologies into the management of our property portfolio whenever possible. At first, we did so because it seemed like the "right" thing to do; time and experience have shown us that it is also the *smart* thing to do. Our tenants testify to low energy bills, and our utility consumption monitoring software tells us that our portfolio-wide energy consumption has dropped by 19% over the past 3 years.

Much of these savings can be attributed to completing energy audits throughout our portfolio, and installation of easily installed LED lighting retrofits. In addition to plucking this "low-hanging" fruit, our development and capital improvement projects have been informed by an adherence to energy conservation standards and to the design of redundancy into our building systems, which promotes longevity as well as efficiency.



- At a ground-up 50-unit apartment rental development we achieved property-wide Energy Star ratings equivalent to 45% efficiency over housing that is constructed to standard building codes.
- At all properties in our portfolio we conducted energy audits, and installed weatherization and energy-efficient LED lighting.
- Building envelope and conditioning equipment upgrades installed at a 28-unit building yielded a 38% reduction in electricity consumption as compared to usage for the same period a year prior to the improvements.
- Condensing boilers and a co-generation unit currently under installation at an 89-unit property are underwritten by a guarantee for annual net savings of \$68,000.
- With assistance and facilitation from the Green Bank, we completed installation of rooftop photovoltaic solar arrays at two properties, which provide substantial offsets to common area electric usage at the properties.
- We are currently in the planning stage for boiler plant improvements to our largest property, which houses 121 units, and are approaching it with similar energy efficiency goals.

Worth noting is that NNI's energy usage reduction of 19% over the past three years is only a partial reflection of what will be realized from the measures detailed above, because much of what we are doing is recent or not yet online. There is an enormous ripple effect to the choices we are making in choosing energy efficient and green technologies; the scale of the benefits realized is a driver of future choices that incorporate these measures on a larger scale. Cost savings support improved maintenance and management of the property, and increase funds available for tenant enrichment activities - tutoring, job skills programs, supplemental meals programs, etc.

I am not a financial analyst or an economic development specialist, but I believe and I am *seeing* that employment of legally-mandated requirements drive development and incorporation of improvements in industry and technology. NNI is implementing clean energy at the consumer level; we are doing so because it brings functional and financial benefits to our properties, AND it contributes to a better future for then and our communities at large. Measures that were financially inaccessible to us only 5 years ago when we began adopting these standards are now both commonplace and affordable, and are allowing us to revisit our early installations and to install additional measures. I am here today to offer my opinion that if we at the consumer level are adopting these technologies, we need to require that our wholesale suppliers step up to the plate and do their part. Connecticut needs the legal mandates of this bill requiring use of renewable energy sources, and the funding to drive capital improvement programs that contribute to achieving both consumer savings and social responsibility. NNI has benefited greatly from the support of the Green Bank; our solar installations would not have been possible without the expertise and assistance of the Green Bank, which provided guidance and financing. This bill will raise the standards promoted by the Green Bank and make evolving energy technologies available and accessible to consumers throughout Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Cathleen Miller at 203-952-7939.