



Testimony of Environment Connecticut State Director Chris Phelps
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Energy and Technology Committee

March 1, 2018

Regarding Senate Bill 9, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Energy Future

Senator Winfield, Senator Formica, Representative Reed, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee; my name is Chris Phelps and I am State Director for Environment Connecticut. I appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments opposing SB 9 in its current form.

Our society's dependence upon carbon-emitting energy sources such as gas, oil, and coal has not only polluted our air, land, and water, it is rapidly warming the planet and changing our climate in ways that pose a grave threat to our future. The threat of catastrophic climate change fueled by unsustainable carbon emissions is not one that must inevitably come to pass. We know that shifting to clean, 100% renewable energy sources is a solution to this challenge that is available to our society today. What is needed is the will on the part of policy makers to do so.

Unfortunately, while SB 9 contains some provisions that could move Connecticut forward towards a zero carbon renewable energy future, it also contains multiple measures that would move the state backwards in its support for solar power, energy efficiency, energy storage, and similar technologies that are critical to meeting our state's climate goals.

We respectfully suggest that in its current form, SB 9 undermines Connecticut's commitment to solar and other renewable energy, and would hinder the state's progress in reducing carbon pollution and meeting its statutory climate targets. We urge the committee to reject SB 9 as currently proposed, and instead pursue legislation that would better support growth in solar, and other renewables, position Connecticut as a leader in renewable energy, energy storage, and efficiency, and align the state's renewable energy policies with its climate goals.

Regarding the specific provisions of SB 9:

We support expansion of the Renewable Portfolio standard as proposed in Section 1. However, while the proposed requirement of that Connecticut receive 40% of its electricity from Class I renewable sources by 2030 is a positive step forward, it does not necessarily put the state on a trajectory to meet its climate goals. This is particularly the case when one considers that meeting the state's carbon emissions targets in other energy sectors, such as transportation and buildings, will require significant electrification of much of those sectors over the course of the next two to three decades. Therefore, we urge the committee to support a stronger commitment to growth in zero carbon renewable electricity than proposed in SB 9. Specifically, we urge support for a 50% Class I requirement by 2030.

We oppose the reductions in the RPS Alternative Compliance Payment (ACP) requirements as proposed in Section 2 and Section 3 of the bill. The ACP provides a financial penalty to hold utilities and electric suppliers accountable should they fail to comply with the RPS requirement for ensuring that a certain percentage of the electricity they deliver to customers in Connecticut comes from Class I resources. By lowering that penalty, these sections of the bill would reduce the incentive for RPS compliance. This proposal runs counter to ACP mechanisms in surrounding states and would weaken Connecticut's RPS compared to its neighbors.

We strongly oppose the anti-solar, anti-consumer proposals in Section 4 and 5, including the proposed elimination of net metering for customers who generate their own electricity on their own property. This provision would have a devastating and negative impact on the solar industry in Connecticut, and directly harm the tens of thousands of families and businesses who want the freedom to generate their own clean, renewable energy for their homes and businesses.

- SB 9 would require owners of solar systems to sell the power they generate to the electric utilities. It then would *force them to buy that power back from the utilities*. In short, under this provision, if you install solar on the roof of your own home, you would be forced to sell the electricity you generate to the utilities instead of using it to directly power your home.
- Homeowners and businesses would further be prevented from using batteries to store the power generated by their own solar systems, on their own property, and using that storage to power their buildings. Energy storage systems, coupled with solar and other renewable energy generation, is an emerging, growing, and potentially game-changing technology with the ability to enable widespread deployment of renewable energy. By forcing Connecticut's citizens to sell their power to the utilities instead of directly using

it themselves, SB 9 would hamstring the state's ability to benefit from these technologies.

Although solar energy's growth in Connecticut has lagged behind its neighbors in recent years, it has, nonetheless, been impressive. According to the Solar Energy Industries Association, over 2,000 people are now employed in the solar industry in the state, and the solar industry has invested over \$1 billion in the state's economy in recent years. At the same time, hundreds of megawatts of solar systems large and small have been built in Connecticut, and the price of solar has dropped by more than 55% over the last 5 years.

Why, when the solar industry is growing, creating jobs, investing in Connecticut, and rapidly lowering the cost of solar power, would Connecticut choose to turn its back on this industry? Particularly considering that growth in zero-carbon renewables like solar is necessary if policy makers in the legislature and administration truly intend to meet the state's climate goals.

Connecticut needs an "all of the above" renewable energy strategy focused on meeting the state's climate goals with a long term commitment to 100% renewable energy. Such a strategy should embrace and encourage growth in all renewable energy sources, such as onshore and offshore wind, large solar farms, rooftop solar, shared community solar systems, combined with an all-in commitment to energy efficiency and energy storage. This is an energy future that could position Connecticut for rapid growth in renewable energy industries, and as a leader in the fight to stop catastrophic climate change. Unfortunately, SB 9 falls short of setting the state on a path towards that future.

Sincerely,

Chris Phelps

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