



**Testimony to the CGA Environment Committee  
By Louis W. Burch  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment**

**March 14, 2018  
Hartford, CT**

Senator Kennedy, Senator Miner, Representative Demicco, distinguished vice chairs, ranking members and esteemed members of the CGA Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

My name is Louis Burch, Connecticut Program Director for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Supported by over 80,000 members in Connecticut and New York State, CCE works to empower communities and advocate for solutions that protect public health and the natural environment. CCE appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony on the following legislation:

**SB 7- AAC Climate Change Planning and Resiliency (SUPPORT)**

The impacts of Climate Change are being felt in communities across the U.S., and are disproportionately affecting our region. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the North Atlantic coast has seen an increase in sea level rise approximately 3–4 times higher than the global average<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, the rate of sea level rise in the Northeast is increasing at an alarming rate. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the rate of sea level rise observed in New London, CT more than tripled from 1989-2012. This dramatic rise in sea level threatens our coastal communities, contributes to coastal erosion and impacts to our wetlands, and creates problems with residential septic systems and other wastewater infrastructure.

SB 7 would help better equip our state and coastal municipalities in planning for and mitigating impacts from sea level rise, by requiring current sea level rise models to be incorporated into our state's Conservation and Development Plans, Civil Preparedness Plan, and hazard mitigation plans.

Additionally, the law would establish a *permanent* Connecticut Council on Climate Change and establish an interim greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal of reducing GHG's by 45% under 2001 levels by 2030. Finally, the bill would incorporate climate change and the interim emissions reduction targets into the State's Comprehensive Energy Strategy (CES) and Integrated Resource Plan (IRP).

**CCE strongly supports adding climate change impacts, including sea level rise to state & local plans of conservation and development, as well as civil preparedness and hazard mitigation plans. Additionally, CCE strongly supports the establishment of interim Global Warming Solutions Act targets into the CES and IRP.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://archive.usgs.gov/archive/sites/www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp-ID=3256.html>

### **SB 341- AAC Clothing Fiber Pollution (SUPPORT)**

Plastic microfibers are a growing problem that can have adverse impacts on our waterways and aquatic wildlife. Plastic fibers of varying sizes are being discovered by researchers in estuaries and waterways the world over. Most come from clothing made with microfibers, including fleeces, jackets and other apparel. According to a study conducted at UC Santa Barbara's School of Environmental Science and Management, more than 1,170 milligrams of microfibers can be released in a single wash, and only about 60% are actually captured by wastewater treatment facilities<sup>2</sup>. The rest escape through the treated wastewater stream and enter into our waterways, where they can threaten fish and other aquatic wildlife.

SB 341 would establish a working group to establish a plan to educate consumers about the impacts of microfibers on marine ecosystems, as well as to disseminate best practices for reducing the disbursement of microfibers into the environment. **CCE supports the establishment a working group to address pollution from plastic microfibers, but we strongly recommend that this legislation add *specific experts in the field of environmental and marine protection to be appointed to the working group, as it already has for multiple apparel industry representatives.***

### **SB 343- AAC the Effects of Climate Change on the Safety Plans for Certain Chemical Facilities in the State and Residents of Distressed Municipalities (SUPPORT)**

Coastal communities are especially at risk from the impacts of climate change, including coastal flooding, sea level rise, and increased extreme weather events. These events do not discriminate between industrial and residential sites, and they can lead to catastrophic emergencies when rising storm waters breach chemical plants, power plants, and other sensitive facilities.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, residents of Houston, TX were exposed to the uncontrolled release of more than 4.5 million pounds of toxic air pollution from refineries and chemical plants across 13 counties, including a variety of known human carcinogens<sup>3</sup>. The flooding that followed the storm led to an explosion at the Arkema chemical plant, which forced residents within a 1.5 mile radius of the site to be forced to evacuate their homes. Plant operators and local government officials both failed to notify the community about the explosion, the potential health and safety risks, or steps that the public could take to protect their families from potential exposure to these toxic chemicals<sup>4</sup>. Subsequently, first responders were not prepared to deal with the hazardous chemicals they would encounter on site. Many quickly became ill and were left unable to respond, due to not being properly equipped with the appropriate safety measures<sup>5</sup>.

SB 343 would require any chemical facilities identified by the DEEP Commissioner to be at risk due to flooding, severe weather events or sea level rise to update their hazard mitigation and evacuation plans to address those risks, and to submit such plans to the local emergency planning committee within 60 days. This would ensure that chemical plants, industrial sites, and first responders in Connecticut's coastal regions are sufficiently equipped and adequately prepared for potential natural disasters that may threaten public health. **CCE strongly supports updating emergency response plans for chemical facilities to include flooding, sea level rise and other climate change impacts that may arise in low lying areas and in close proximity to waters of the state.**

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.esm.ucsb.edu/research/2016Group\\_Projects/documents/PataPlastFinalReport.pdf](http://www.esm.ucsb.edu/research/2016Group_Projects/documents/PataPlastFinalReport.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/09/08/us/houston-hurricane-harvey-hazardous-chemicals.html>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/08/30/texas-town-under-emergency-evacuation-as-flooded-chemical-plant-nears-explosion/?utm\\_term=.2102f5880b76](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/08/30/texas-town-under-emergency-evacuation-as-flooded-chemical-plant-nears-explosion/?utm_term=.2102f5880b76)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/07/arkema-sued-over-injuries-in-chemical-plant-fire-after-hurricane-harvey.html>

### **SB 345- AAC Climate Change Education in Connecticut Schools (SUPPORT)**

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing our nation today. According to the National Academy of Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and many others, manmade climate change is having a measurable impact on our planet, and urgent action is needed to prevent irreversible changes in our environment<sup>6</sup>.

SB 345 requires Connecticut's educational standards be amended to include Next Generation Science Standards, which involve critical analytical skills and core concepts around a number of subject areas, including modeling, predicting and managing current and future climate impacts due to climate change<sup>7</sup>. The students of today will have a profound responsibility of leading the fight against climate change in the future, and should be prepared with the facts and science about climate change. **CCE strongly supports making climate change education a basic requirement for all Connecticut students, and respectfully urges this committee to pass this legislation as soon as possible.**

### **SB 427- AAC Public Trust Component of the State Water Plan (OPPOSED)**

Water is a public resource, and as such, should be protected and held within the public trust. The most prevalent public comment received by the Water Planning Council during the State water planning process was that water should be protected as a public trust resource, and Connecticut's water management policies should aim to strike a careful balance between the needs of a healthy environment, the public water supply, and sustainable economic development.

SB 427 would effectively exempt private water supply wells from being regulated as a public trust resource under CT State Statutes, but it does not specify what type of private well would be included under this legislation. The bill does not distinguish between small, residential wells and large, private wells, for use by large water companies, private business enterprises, etc. Connecticut is currently in the process of producing a statewide drought plan, which is urgently needed to help balance critical water supply needs during periods of drought. To exempt such a diverse class of water supplies from this process would totally undermine Connecticut's drought planning activities and could threaten sustainable future management of our water resources. **CCE is strongly opposed to a blanket policy exempting private water wells from regulation as a public trust resource, as this could lead to unanticipated consequences, especially during times of drought.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on these important issues. CCE appreciates the committee's consideration and we look forward to working with you on these initiatives moving forward.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nextgenscience.org/topic-arrangement/hsweather-and-climate>