



Renewable Energy and Efficiency Business Association, Inc.

**SB 102: ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE-RELATED STATUTES**

*Since 2010, the Renewable Energy and Efficiency Business Association, Inc. (REEBA) has been a major trade association in Connecticut representing the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries in Connecticut*

The Renewable Energy and Efficiency Business Association (REEBA) **supports SB 102**, specifically lines 484 through 487, which seek to amend Public Act 17-218, AN ACT CONCERNING THE INSTALLATION OF CERTAIN SOLAR FACILITIES ON PRODUCTIVE FARMLANDS, INCENTIVES FOR THE USE OF ANAEROBIC DIGESTERS BY AGRICULTURAL CUSTOMER HOSTS, APPLICATIONS CONCERNING THE USE OF KELP IN CERTAIN BIOFUELS AND THE PERMITTING OF WASTE CONVERSION FACILITIES.

This bill, which passed in 2017, restricted the development of solar projects on prime farmland and core forest unless DEEP and the Department of Agriculture determined that the development of a solar project would not materially impact the core forest or prime farmland. The bill before us seeks to change the requirement from materially impact to permanently impact. We see this change as a huge step in the right direction. Unlike housing or commercial development solar arrays typically have a lifespan of 20-25 years after which they can be decommissioned and removed.

We would also recommend that the agencies be required to affirmatively state, within a prescribed timeframe, that the projects would have a permanent impact as opposed to existing law which requires that they inform the Siting Council that projects will not have an impact on the proposed site. In addition, we recommend that the Siting Council be allowed to consider rebuttable evidence in opposition to the agencies finding and also consider a mitigation plan.

On behalf of REEBA I thank you for this opportunity to speak and ask that you give serious consideration to our proposed changes.

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, (ii) the council does not find a substantial adverse environmental effect, and (iii) for a solar photovoltaic facility with a capacity of two or more megawatts, to be located on prime farmland or forestland, excluding any such facility that was selected by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection in any solicitation issued prior to July 1, 2017, pursuant to section 16a-3f, 16a-3g or 16a-3j, unless the Department of Agriculture represents, in writing, to the council that such project will [not materially] permanently affect the status of such land as prime farmland or unless the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection represents, in writing, to the council that such project will [not materially] permanently affect the status of such land as core forest no later than 30 days after any request for determination as to whether the land is considered prime farmland or core forest. Any such written request for a determination as to whether the land is considered prime farmland or core forest shall precede a filing with the Siting Council. In conducting an evaluation of a project for purposes of subparagraph (B)(iii) of this subsection, the Departments of Agriculture and Energy and Environmental Protection may consult with the United States Department of Agriculture and soil and water conservation districts. The council may consider rebuttable evidence in opposition to the findings of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture. The council may also consider a mitigation plan.