

Written Testimony of Pamela Arifian, Director of the United Church of Christ  
Northeast Environmental Justice Center Before the Connecticut General Assembly  
Environment Committee

March 12, 2018

Written Testimony for

**Senate Bill (SB) 427: An Act Concerning Public Trust Components of the State  
Water Plan**

Honorable Senator Miner, Senator Kennedy, Representative Demicco and  
distinguished members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to SB 427 to change the  
Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA), the bedrock statute protecting  
clean water and air. The bill proposes to provide that private drinking wells are not  
held in the public trust and therefore not subject to regulation by the State Water  
Plan.

This bill's language could undercut the principle upon which governments exist: the  
public trust doctrine protects, preserves and enhances natural resources for public  
use. It means that government is for the people; this bill exempts owners of private  
wells from government protection.

The public trust resource designated in existing law is water itself, not pipes, or  
wells, or pumps; but this bill only talks about wells.

It's not scientifically possible to distinguish one part of groundwater from another  
part of groundwater. Water is a continuum – above ground, underground, through  
ground.

What is the meaning of "private" wells? Does it mean small wells owned by  
individuals? Does it include privately owned wells such as in well fields owned by  
private water utilities, or by commercial water bottling companies?

At a time when our General Assembly is calling for a drought management plan to  
protect ALL residents, it is too risky to let private well owners such as private water  
bottling companies be exempt from protecting and preserving this public resource.

Thank you again for the opportunity to bear witness and to provide testimony in  
opposition to SB 427, which would exempt private drinking wells from the  
protection of the public trust in the CEPA.

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