

Environment Committee,

I am writing to urge members of the Environment Committee to vote YES on HB5103 to improve protections for environmental justice communities by strengthening requirements for developers who want to build polluting facilities and imposing stiffer penalties for failing to meet those requirements.

Environmental Justice (EJ) communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change, sea level rise, toxic air and water pollution and other threats to public health and safety. Residents from Connecticut's five largest cities (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Stamford, and Waterbury) account for 18% of Connecticut's total population, yet they accounted for 44% of all acute asthma care charges in 2018.

Connecticut's existing EJ law was written in the spirit of equity and transparency, and yet it has failed to provide real, meaningful protections for the public in some of Connecticut's most underserved communities.

While PA 08-94 created a useful framework for promoting public participation during the siting of polluting facilities, it did not explicitly require those measures as a prerequisite. HB 5103 would make it mandatory for developers to notify community stakeholders, conduct public meetings and inform the public about potential health and environmental impacts before being getting approval from DEEP/CT Siting Council. HB 5103 clarifies that any permit application that does not meet the necessary public notice requirements would be considered incomplete and ineligible for approval.

I strongly support HB 5103 as a way to require mandatory public involvement and increase transparency in the siting of polluting facilities in Connecticut's EJ communities.

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