



**SIERRA
CLUB**

*Connecticut Chapter
P.O. Box 270595
West Hartford, Connecticut 06127
connecticut.sierraclub.org*

Dear Environment Committee Chairs Cohen and Demicco, Vice-Chairs Gresko and Kushner, Ranking Members Harding and Miner, and distinguished members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Sierra Club and our more than 40,000 members and supporters in Connecticut, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 5103, SB 99, and HJ 1.

HB 5103 An Act Requiring an Evaluation of the State's Environmental Justice Law

Sierra Club Connecticut strongly supports HB 5103. Connecticut's Environmental Justice Law must be strengthened to ensure residents of Environmental Justice Communities have notice of and the opportunity to provide input on the permitting of pollution emitting projects in their neighborhoods, have meaningful mitigation options, and have recourse when the law has not been followed.

There is ample evidence of the disproportionate exposure to and impact of emissions on residents of our state's Environmental Justice Communities. Minority and low-income communities are impacted by air pollution at a higher rate than other communities due to the siting of facilities like energy and solid waste infrastructure that emit particulate pollution.¹ Health disparities in our cities including childhood asthma rates and other health outcomes.

It is critical that Connecticut take action to address this. There are numerous ways we can and should address pollution and environmental justice; strengthening our Environmental Justice Law, as this bill will, is a necessary and meaningful step in the right direction. Sierra Club Connecticut supports all the changes proposed in HB 5103 including requiring notification of community members and expanding the impacts and mitigation activities and programs that can be addressed in a "community benefit agreement," and nullifying applications that do not follow the requirement of the Environmental Justice Law.

SB 99 An Act Considering the Use and Distribution of Polystyrene Products

Sierra Club Connecticut supports SB 99 to reduce the use and distribution of polystyrene products. We are strongly in support of eliminating plastic and polystyrene food service items such as, but not limited to, food containers, plates, bowls, beverage cups and lids, utensils, straws, insulated beverage cups and bowls, clamshell food containers, and trays.

A ban of polystyrene food service items addresses a host of impacts these products have on human health, and the health of our environment. Among the many reasons these products should be banned are:

¹ <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304297>

- Polystyrene is based on styrene, a neurotoxin and probable carcinogen.²
- Plastic production is directly connected to climate change as 99% of plastics are derived from fossil fuels.
- U.S. shorelines are littered with millions of tons of single-use plastic. 91% of the plastic we use is not recycled and instead ends up in landfills or the ocean. Polystyrene items make up the fifth through seventh largest type of litter from land-based sources found on U.S. coasts.³
- Polystyrene items harm wildlife. The foam form in particular is often mistaken as food by both domesticated and wild animals.^{4 & 5}
- Polystyrene does not biodegrade and although they do fragment through mechanical action and photodegradation in the presence of light, these processes are slow taking an estimated 200+ years to complete.

HJ 1 Resolution Proposing the Adoption of the Long Island Blue Plan

Sierra Club Connecticut supports HJ 1 to adopt the Long Island Blue Plan, a resource that provides guidance and a collaborative vision for the future of Long Island Sound. The plan provides information and guidance in decision making that will aid stakeholders including those that love the Sound, conservation interest, those that use the Sound for recreational and commercial purposes, state and local agencies, and those with development and economic interests. The plan identifies and protects Significant Human Use Area and Ecologically Significant areas. It's a resource the public, regulators, and developers alike can use to help make good decisions about the Sound. This unique approach promotes communication between project proponents and existing users, so that mutually-beneficial outcomes may be found and conflicts can be avoided.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues and consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Samantha Dynowski, State Director
Sierra Club Connecticut

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Styrene", Report on Carcinogens, Twelfth Edition, 2011, p. 383-391, <http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/ntp/roc/twelfth/roc12.pdf>

³ Ocean Conservancy, "International Coastal Cleanup 2013 Report", p. 14
<http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/international-coastal-cleanup/2013-trash-free-seas-report.pdf>

⁴ Olivia Feinstein* & Peter Hodum University of Puget Sound, Tacoma WA "Northern Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*) as bio-indicators of endocrine disrupting plasticizers in the marine surface environment"
http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1168&context=summer_research

⁵ ⁴ <http://www.backyardchickens.com/t/23861/chickens-are-eating-styrofoam-help>