

Aaron Goode
45 William Street
New Haven CT 06511

I would like to testify in favor of three bills in today's hearing -- HB 6551, SB 884 and HB 6441.

HB 6551: An Act Concerning Environmental Air Quality

I served on the steering committee of the New Haven Environmental Justice Network from 2008-2016, during which time Connecticut's first "Environmental Justice Law" (Public Act 08-94) was enacted. PA 08-94 was very useful to our organization on several occasions, especially in 2010 when PSE&G wished to add three new peak boilers at its Harbor Station power plant in what was, and remains, arguably the most environmentally overburdened census tract in the entire state of Connecticut. Thanks to the EJ statute we were able to ensure that no net increase in harmful air pollution would result from the Harbor Station expansion.

Recently an effort by a major transfer station in New Haven to expand its operations to include putrescible waste exposed some of the infirmities with the EJ law. The facility's expansion was permitted by DEEP despite massive public opposition because of the lack of statutory authority to consider cumulative impacts in the area, which already suffers from the environmental and health impacts of a 500 MW power plant, a sludge incinerator, the port of New Haven, gas pipelines, multiple transfer stations, chemical plants, and two interstate highways -- all within the same census tract.

Based on these experiences, I would strongly support legislation to strengthen the EJ statute by eliminating exemptions for certain classes of polluting facilities and allowing consideration of cumulative impacts, but not any changes that would undermine the original intent of the bill, namely to reduce harmful environmental exposure, even if those changes would create auxiliary 'community benefits.'

SB 884 : An Act Reducing Transportation Related Carbon Emissions

The largest single portion of greenhouse gas emissions in CT comes from the transportation sector. No climate mitigation plan can succeed without strong and direct intervention in the transportation sector, which requires the adoption of price signals on a regional basis. Implementing the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) will allow Connecticut to partner with other states in the Northeast to collaboratively transition to cleaner transportation such as electrified mass transit, active transportation options (biking / walking), and EVs / LEVs.

Suggestions that TCI is just a "gas tax" miss the point: Connecticut already has a massive unseen pollution tax that is paid every day by low-income residents of New Haven, Bridgeport and Hartford through asthma hospitalizations, wide prevalence of respiratory illness, and missed school days (asthma is the number one reason that New Haven children miss school). TCI merely internalizes the externalized transportation costs that are currently shouldered by those who can least afford them. Aside from the climate benefits of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, TCI's lowering the tropospheric ozone and particulate matter levels from tailpipe emissions will improve the health and safety of residents in areas surrounded by highways and transportation hubs, benefits that will more than offset additional costs to energy producers or consumers. SB 884 is pro-health, pro-environment, pro-fairness, pro-equity and should be approved.

HB 6441 : An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation

It is essential that Connecticut municipalities be able to flexibly respond to predicted changes in climate: better drainage systems for increasing precipitation, green infrastructure, improved wastewater and stormwater treatment infrastructure, a more resilient electric grid and localized microgrids. These innovations and adaptations are only possible if funding mechanisms such as stormwater authorities are available to our municipalities. Permitting and facilitating the creation of stormwater utilities will allow New Haven to continue and expand its aggressive stormwater management and mitigation efforts over the last 5-10 years -- the building out of hundreds of bioswales, rain gardens, retention basins and other green infrastructure projects across the city, which have proven extremely successful at runoff source reduction and mitigated the cost of building new "gray" infrastructure; and allow other municipalities to achieve the same environmental and economic benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these matters.