



Testimony of Chris Phelps, State Director, Environment Connecticut  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Energy & Technology Committee

March 4, 2021

**RE:**

- **SB 882 AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND HOME AFFORDABILITY - Support with comments**
- **SB 952 AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS - Support**
- **HB 6524 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SOLICITATION OF NEW FUEL CELL ELECTRICITY GENERATION PROJECTS - Oppose**

Environment Connecticut is a nonprofit, nonpartisan environmental advocacy organization. Together with our colleagues at Environment America and state environment groups across the country, we advocate for clean air, clean water, clean energy, open spaces, and a safe climate.

Global warming and climate change represent direct and growing threats to our economic future, public health and safety, and the stability of our society. Decades of policy and political debate have produced some progress towards mitigating the problem, but to-date, the response of local, state, and federal governments has failed to keep pace with the problem of climate change. Today, the facts of climate change are clear. One fact in particular stands out. Simply put, we must end the use of fossil fuels in our economy and do so over the course the next 15 to 30 years.

Connecticut has made strides towards addressing the problem of climate change. The Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA), setting pollution reduction targets, combined with growth in solar and wind energy commitments over the past decade are a good start. But the state is still not on track to achieve what it must to do our part to stop global warming and climate change.

The bills before you present both opportunities and obstacles to achieving the goal of stopping climate change.

**SB 882:**

This proposal from the governor would codify the goal established, in a 2019 Executive Order, of meeting Connecticut's electric supply using entirely carbon-free generation sources by 2040. This bill also would authorize DEEP to procure an amount of electricity equivalent to approximately 1 percent of Connecticut's load from efficiency and demand response resources. And the bill also would require residential property owners to disclose energy performance and bill history to prospective buyers and tenants.

SB 882 in its current form will help move Connecticut closer to meeting its climate goals, reduce use of fossil fuels, and help consumers better control their energy costs.

"100%" clean energy goal: Committing, within the GWSA to meet our state's electric supply using 100% carbon-free resources is a good step, but only a step towards transitioning our state's electric system to a clean, renewable energy future and ending use of fossil fuels. We respectfully recommend that the committee include the following additional measures within this legislation.

- Applying the 100% carbon-free requirement to both supply and generation. This would avoid the potential for an absurd outcome in which Connecticut achieves carbon-free generation on paper, while continuing to allow fossil fuel generation sources to continue operating within the state post-2040.
- Requiring that the state meet interim benchmarks in 2030 and 2035 significantly increasing the share of the state's electric supply met by carbon free renewable resources such as solar, wind, and energy storage.
- Require that state agencies comply with the GWSA and allow for citizen enforcement of the GWSA under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act.

**SB 952:**

This bill would set an energy storage deployment goal of 1GW by 2030, increase virtual net metering caps, along with additional provisions.

We strongly support the bill's support for deploying large scale energy storage in Connecticut. Pursuing aggressive energy storage deployment is a critical step towards accelerating the shift away from fossil fuel generation to renewables. Energy storage also has the potential to provide substantial energy security and resilience benefits to Connecticut's electric grid. Big commitments to energy storage are a vital tool for making progress towards meeting our climate goals.

Regarding section 10 of this bill, we support this language. It properly balances the need to avoid placing unnecessary excess obstacles in the path of deployment of new solar generation relative to other potential land uses, while also retaining the ability of DEEP to mitigate potential environmental impacts of such land uses.

**HB 6524:**

This bill seeks to expand deployment of fuel cells for electric generation in Connecticut. Without commenting on other aspects of HB 6524, we note that as written, this bill has the potential to subsidize increased deployment of new fossil fuel electric generation in the form of fuel cells powered by high carbon-emitting fossil fuels. Such a policy runs directly counter to the policy goals of many of the other bills on your agenda, including SB 882.

If Connecticut's policy makers are going to make a serious commitment to achieving the goals of the Global Warming Solutions Act, transitioning to 100% carbon free and renewable energy, and doing what is necessary to stop climate change, then they should reject proposals to subsidize deployment of new fossil fuel energy sources. Therefore, Environment Connecticut respectfully recommends that, in the interest of furthering the dual goals of supporting growth of our in-state fuel cell industry *and* meeting our climate and clean energy goals, that HB 6524 be amended to require that the only fuel cell generation supported by the bill be powered by renewable resources, *not* fossil fuels. Without such a change to the bill, Environment Connecticut respectfully opposes HB 6524 as written.

Sincerely,

Chris Phelps  
State Director, Environment Connecticut