



**Testimony to the CGA Energy & Technology Committee
By Louis Rosado Burch
Citizens Campaign for the Environment**

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Hartford, CT**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today. My name is Louis Rosado Burch, Connecticut Program Director for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Supported by over 120,000 members in Connecticut and New York State, CCE advocates for policy solutions that protect public health and the natural environment. CCE appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in support of S.B. 882, S.B. 952 and H.B. 6523, as well as in opposition to S.B. 950.

The impacts of climate change are well documented and are evident in our communities. CO₂ and methane gas are significant contributors to the climate crisis and are directly related to the production and widespread consumption of fossil fuels.

CT Attorney General William Tong filed a lawsuit against Exxon Mobil in September of 2020 for Exxon's efforts to suppress sound science confirming the relationship between fossil fuels and global warming.¹ This demonstrates an understanding of the central role fossil fuels play in this crisis, and our State energy priorities should reflect this reality as well.

States like Connecticut are in a unique position to implement efforts to curb those emissions through progressive energy policy. In 2019, Governor Lamont approved an Executive Order that put our state on a pathway to achieve a 100% carbon-free energy system by the year 2040.

To meet this important goal, urgent progress is needed on advancing clean, renewable energy, energy efficiency and distributed generation strategies. CCE appreciates this committee's efforts to move Connecticut in this direction, but we can and must do more.

S.B. 882: AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND HOME ENERGY AFFORDABILITY (SUPPORT, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS)

CCE strongly supports the bill's intent to codify the Governor's 100% carbon-free electricity goal and would like to highlight that the language must be amended to apply broadly to generation and supply. Unfortunately, this bill only limits carbon emissions from "electricity supplied to electric customers in the state." As written, S.B. 882 creates a loophole which could permit electric sector CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel power plants, if that power is sold for distribution outside of Connecticut. This does nothing to reduce harmful air emissions from

¹ <https://portal.ct.gov/AG/Press-Releases/2020-Press-Releases/CONNECTICUT-SUES-EXXON-FOR-DECADES-OF-DECEIT-REGARDING-CLIMATE-CHANGE>

fossil fuels burned in our state, nor does it promote any meaningful reductions of global greenhouse gas across the region.

According to the USEIA, Connecticut's annual CO₂ emissions totaled 37.2 million metric tons in 2018, with 9.5 million metric tons coming from the electric sector.^{2,3} As the state moves towards a cleaner, more reliable energy grid, significant reductions in energy sector emissions are needed. ***CCE strongly supports the intent of this bill, with recommendations to apply the 100% by 2040 requirements to all energy generation in the state.***

CCE appreciates the committee's efforts to promote energy efficiency. S.B. 882 authorizes DEEP to procure up to 300,000 MWh of electricity from demand response and energy efficiency measures, which directly benefit low-income and underserved communities.

The cleanest energy is energy that is not used. This bill would direct utilities to put additional resources into energy efficiency programs, helping ratepayers save money and reducing demand. This is especially critical as Connecticut confronts challenges related to intermittent blackouts and seeks to ramp up investments into renewable energy resources such as clean wind and solar.

Finally, the bill requires landlords to disclose a property's energy performance to prospective renters and buyers in advance. This helps consumers make educated decisions about where they choose to live, by providing them with a realistic projection of their monthly energy costs. As Connecticut works to promote energy efficiency and provide ratepayers with relief, incentives are needed to ensure that rental properties (particularly older ones) are adequately retrofitted to achieve optimal energy efficiency.

S.B. 952: AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS (SUPPORT, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS)

CCE strongly supports efforts to promote responsible solar development in our State. S.B. 952 establishes solar energy storage goals (1 GW by 2030) and increases the virtual net metering cap from \$20-30 million/year and permits electric distribution companies to procure up to 150 MW of clean solar power. In addition, SB 952 directs DEEP and PURA to invest to invest in innovative solar programs which can help modernize our grid and protect against unexpected interruptions, especially during peak energy usage periods.

CCE strongly supports efforts to develop energy storage infrastructure in our State. This technology is critical for advancing distributed energy solutions, can promote innovation and job creation and improve resilience within the electric grid. It is, however, critical that these benefits are equitably made available to all ratepayers, and not just a handful of large generators. In the past, developers have snapped up subsidies that are paid for by individual households and businesses. ***CCE recommends that the committee strengthen the language to ensure that ratepayers protected under Section 2. (a) also enjoy access to behind the meter incentives they contribute to each month through their electric bills.***

Regarding the siting of solar infrastructure, CCE recognizes the need to balance the State's clean energy goals with existing conservation priorities, including the preservation of core forests and productive agricultural lands. We recommend that any permitting process for solar arrays include a thorough review of potential environmental impacts and evaluation of environmentally suitable alternatives. Further, we

² <https://www.eia.gov/state/?sid=CT>

³ <https://www.eia.gov/electricity/state/connecticut/>

recommend a process that incentivizes the development of grid-scale solar infrastructure on brownfields wherever possible, as an alternative to siting solar arrays on prime farmland.

H.B. 6523: AN ACT CONCERNING VIRTUAL NET METERING CREDITS FOR MANUFACTURERS IN DISTRESSED MUNICIPALITIES (SUPPORT, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS)

CCE supports the committee's effort to make virtual net metering credits available to a wider range of energy consumers in the state. H.B. 6523 would also raise the VNM cap from \$20 to \$30 million/per year, and specifies that at least \$10 million of those subsidies go to manufacturers in distressed municipalities. CCE cautions, however, that simply adding new participants to the program without substantially raising or eliminating the cap on virtual net metering, manufacturers would find themselves competing with municipalities for those subsidies. *CCE strongly supports making manufacturers in distressed municipalities eligible for virtual net metering, and recommends the language be amended to substantially increase or eliminate the annual cap on VNM credits.*

S.B. 950: AN ACT CONCERNING THE REPLACEMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITY POLES AND REVISING VEGETATION MANAGEMENT IN UTILITY PROTECTION ZONES (OPPOSE)

CCE opposes S.B.950 on the grounds that it will allow utilities to do tree trimming within our communities with little to no oversight or notification of affected parties. The bill has received opposition from multiple municipal tree wardens, and it undoes years of advocacy from citizen activists who have worked to ensure transparency and oversight on behalf of the public regarding to routine tree trimming.