

Testimony in Favor of Senate Bill 882

An Act Concerning Climate Change Mitigation and Home Energy Affordability

Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly's Energy and Technology Committee

Submit to: envtestimony@cga.ct.gov

To: Honorable Co-Chairs Needleman, and Arconti as well as the other members of the Energy and Technology Committee.

From: Mitchel Kvedar, State Affairs Coordinator of UConn's Undergraduate Student Government, Co-Director of Sunrise Movement Connecticut, Burlington Board of Conservation Member, Former Member of then Governor-elect Lamont's Transition Committee on Energy Policy

My name is Mitchel Kvedar, I am the Co-Director of the Sunrise Movement here in CT, State Affairs Coordinator of the UConn Student Government, Former Member of then Governor-elect Lamont's Transition Committee on Energy Policy, a Junior studying political science and environmental studies at UConn, and a board of conservation member from Burlington Connecticut.

Good morning, and thank you for allowing me this opportunity to submit testimony. Today I am speaking in favor of this bill, yet also call for changes to be made.

The notion of codifying the governor's wishes from his various executive orders is very important. The Governor is putting us in the right direction with his initiatives, in order to decrease our greenhouse gas emissions, ramp up energy efficiency, and bring about a green economy in CT so that we may lead the northeast and the nation in such efforts. Yet, we must do more, and acknowledge the limitations in this bill.

First, this bill requires that 100% of the electricity CONSUMED - but not PRODUCED in the state of CT be carbon neutral by 2040. While this is better than nothing – we need to be thinking bigger, in order of magnitude of the crisis we face. Worst though, this would allow our citizens to living with dirty fossil fuel plants and their impacts on CT air, land, and water – for not even their own benefit. Such an idea is a horrible one, and rather we must ensure all energy produced and consumed in our state is carbon neutral by 2040.

The governor, and state legislature cannot pretend that we are going carbon neutral if CT builds new fossil fuel plants just to export the energy. The effects of greenhouse gasses and exacerbated climate change are felt by all, no matter where the energy ends up. If it's produced here at home, it harms CT residents even more.

Next, while the governor has laid out a timeline to fight climate change and achieve neutrality, it is unfortunately not fast enough. We need a rapid transition away from fossil fuels in order to

stave off the worst effects of the climate crisis. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us we only have until 2030 to limit global warming to 1.5 C, and prevent the worst scenarios of the climate crisis from becoming a reality. A just, and rapid transition is possible and needed.

The general sentiment for some time now has been CT is behind in comparison to our neighboring states, and the general public views CT as failing. I disagree with both notions, and believe that if CT were to greatly invest in creating a fully fledged green economy, on the basis of a Green New Deal, we could lead the nation and see a revival like none other in our state.

As such, the timeline in this bill needs to be revised. We must set a target of net zero carbon dioxide emissions much sooner than currently stands. Most reports on the timetable we have to follow, are conservative in nature, and with fossil fuels ramping up once more as we head out of the pandemic, we must act.

Furthermore, there is a provision in this bill that would give the DEEP commissioner sole authority to set greenhouse gas reduction and electricity supply and generation targets. While DEEP is supposed to be the stewards of our environment and our future, and as an individual who believes in the goals of the department ever since I was a young boy, DEEP has not always been the best ally in the fight against climate change, as many CT environmental groups believe. While the intention is of course good, there is always more to be done and actions to be taken, and DEEP is often an obstacle rather than an ally to strongly fighting the climate crisis. This provision should be amended to clarify that there will be proper checks and balances in place, including a diverse oversight board in determining future decisions.

And finally, this bill should include a fossil fuel moratorium. While this is a strong and bold ask, the time is now to act boldly without hesitation. Connecticut can lead with this initiative and fully invest in itself with renewable energy and energy efficiency programs. This will occur inevitably at some point – and rather than being late to the party, why not be pioneers.

Some argue such would kill jobs. But rather it would propel our economy. Energy Efficiency is one of the leading job markets in our state, and if we doubled down on such we would create new jobs, save our ratepayers money (in a state that has among the highest energy prices in the nation), and be reducing our demand for energy – be it sources from fossil fuels, renewables, or nuclear. It is a win, win, win.

I wish to remind everyone this comes at a time in which our Attorney General William Tong, is actively suing Exxon Mobile for failing to inform the public/ concealing information from them in regards to the dangers of fossil fuels, and climate change – and in a bid to gain retribution for current and future damages due to the climate crisis. Such a stance is bold, and correct and all faucets of CT should be standing in such a stance – meaning both legislation, and executive action should be aligned with such.

Again, support this bill – yet also support something bolder, something that reflects the science, and something that respects, even loves the future generations of our state.

Students statewide are fighting against fossil fuels relentlessly and advocating for a green future for our people, and our planet. As high school students advocate through their civics course projects for community solar, as UConn students push against new fossil fuel boilers to power Storrs, it is without doubt that the future is in this direction. Be bold, and stand for our future.

Thank you for your time,

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