



SIERRA CLUB

Connecticut Chapter
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March 8, 2021

Dear Senator Haskell, Representative Lemar, Senator Cassano, Representative Simms, Senator Somers, Representative Carney and members of the Transportation 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 before you today.

The Sierra Club is committed to solving the climate crisis we face with just and equitable solutions that will result in a healthy world for everyone. Transportation pollution in Connecticut is a serious problem for public health and our climate. According to the latest greenhouse gas inventory¹ from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the transportation sector emits more greenhouse gas - 38% of the state's total - than any other sector. Poor air quality is contributing to a health crisis disproportionately impacting Black, Brown and low income communities with acute and chronic respiratory problems such as asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, and other lung diseases. A Harvard report released last month shows that an annual 8 million premature deaths worldwide and over 350,000 in the United States were a direct consequence of burning fossil fuel.² The report identifies the Northeastern United States is one of the hardest hit areas in the world.

HB 6570

An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Development and Municipal Zoning

Sierra Club Connecticut offers this testimony in support of HB 6570's promotion of coordinated, planned residential improvements to transportation pollution that include evolving our communities to make them more walkable, bikeable and with easy access to clean, pollution free public transit. We agree that the highest density development should be located near existing transit or built so that it can support future transit options, whether in an urban, suburban or rural context, so that every resident has ready access to employment, food, education and healthcare.

We also strongly support affordable housing as a human right and believe that all neighborhoods should be open to people of all income levels and backgrounds. Every neighborhood should host its fair share of affordable and low-income housing through equitable zoning, regulation, and investment. If we make communities not only dense, but inclusive, then more people will benefit from sustainable, smart development and enjoy improved public health, enhanced quality of life, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.

We believe that HB 6570 supports these goals.

Although sections (c) (2) and (3) encourage and provide incentives for energy efficiency patterns of development, solar energy, and passive solar energy techniques as a first step in meeting our

¹ https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/2017_GHG_Inventory/2017_GHG_Inventory.pdf

² <https://www.seas.harvard.edu/news/2021/02/deaths-fossil-fuel-emissions-higher-previously-thought>

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greenhouse gas reduction goals, we would like to see them strengthened. We respectfully submit recommendations that would enhance the bill's building standards to further improve health, economic, and climate resiliency within the communities affected by HB 6570. These standards should be developed and adopted now to future proof new development for our state's climate goals and the impacts of climate change.

We recommend the building standards for development in HB 6570 should allow for only energy efficient, net-zero, all-electric, zero embodied carbon designs. These standards are the most cost effective and healthy choice for all new buildings. They are the future of clean buildings and cities such as Washington D.C.³, and towns in California⁴ have already adopted codes that would move them toward this future. And because of advances in technology, the cost of net-zero buildings need not be higher than conventional buildings. Net-zero buildings also have lower lifetime costs, using less energy and supplying their own renewable energy.⁵ Net-zero buildings are better for human health as they do not have the air pollutants associated with combustion of gas and other fossil fuels.⁶

Homes and infrastructure built now will last many decades. We must ensure buildings constructed now are prepared to comply with meeting our Global WArming Solutions Act targets to avoid costly retrofits later on.

We support

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Ann Gadwah
Advocacy and Outreach Organizer
Sierra Club Connecticut

³ <https://gettingtozeroforum.org/appendix-z-offers-district-buildings-a-path-to-net-zero-energy/>

⁴ <https://www.sierraclub.org/articles/2020/12/californias-cities-lead-way-gas-free-future>

⁵ <https://rmi.org/insight/the-new-economics-of-electrifying-buildings>

⁶ <https://coeh.ph.ucla.edu/effects-residential-gas-appliances-indoor-and-outdoor-air-quality-and-public-health-california>