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Testimony in support of SB-4: AAC The Connecticut Clean Air Act
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I would like to thank co- chairs, Representative Lemar, Senator Haskell, vice chairs - Senator Cassano and Representative Sims and ranking members, Representative Carney and Senator Somers for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SB-4 - An Act Concerning the Connecticut Clean Air Act.

I am writing in support of SB-4 An Act Concerning the Connecticut Clean Air Act. The City of Bridgeport supports this bill and the expansion of the CHEAPR program. While the City supports the intent of this bill, we believe stronger language needs to be included to ensure resources are going to residents in environmental justice communities, as this bill purports. The City supports the expansion of CHEAPR and the inclusion of e-bikes, though the City has concerns as the bill currently stands, over its implementation and ability to deliver results to the intended residents in environmental justice communities.

Bridgeport is the largest City in the state, with close to 150,000 residents and one of the most diverse. In Bridgeport, 33% of the residents identify as Black, 40% as Hispanic, 20% as white, and another 7% of other. The City's median household income is $45k, with a sharp divide between renters and homeowners, with renters making $30k annually and homeowners $76K. This divide is clear in the poorest census tracts which are the most diverse and have lower levels of educational attainment and opportunity, and moderately high levels of linguistic isolation, being above the 90th percentile for the state. Further, residents, and specifically the census tracts, where low-income individuals reside, face high rates of asthma and heart disease. Residents in the City of Bridgeport do not only bear a significant environmental burden compared to neighboring municipalities, but also have significantly lower levels of wealth, educational attainment, and higher levels of disease. Combing environmental, social, and economic factors make mitigating the environmental injustice that much more challenging and why they must be considered. Stronger action needs to be taken in this bill, to ensure the residents bearing the largest burden, are able to access and use the resources the state says it is directing towards them.

The bill puts the maximum E-bike price threshold eligibility at $2,000, which may be reflective of the entire market of the available e-bikes, however this threshold will become a barrier when implemented as local bike shops carry a different and more narrow stock than is available online. The City would like to see an increase in the threshold for E-bikes eligible for a rebate to at least $3,500. This will also help support the many food delivery drivers in the City that may wish to use a bike but need the extra carrying capacity that a standard e-bike cannot support. The City feels that the limit on 10 rebates in a year, and 20 in total, is not representative of the size of larger communities, and specifically urban centers, which have the highest population density, and where electrical vehicle and e-bike usage are the most practical and easily implementable. The City would like to see the maximum number changed, specifically for EJ Communities to be able to receive 20 rebates in a year for a maximum of 40 total.

The City supports income thresholds for this rebate program and would ask that the rebate for residents residing in EJ census tracts to be eligible for a $1,000 rebate for an e-bike. This is not only

to provide access, but a recognition of the important role e-bikes serve, as alternative transportation from motor vehicles, which cause significantly more infrastructure damage over time than e-bikes. As currently proposed $500 does not make a significant dent in the price of an electric bike when your income is significantly below the poverty thresholds established by the state and federal government.
The City would ask the Committee to reflect on the purchase of a new electric vehicle, valued at $50,000, with a rebate of $5,000, leaving a total of $45,000 which the individual is responsible for. In Bridgeport, home to a large population of renters, and an environmental justice community, the median household income for a renter is $30,000, with 50% of the City being renters and 59% of renters are cost burdened. The way this bill is currently written, it is unrealistic that the benefits from this program, will reach those most in need in environmental justice communities and be able to be taken up at a rate, to make a meaningful difference. The most likely outcome, as currently framed, is those with the most economic resources and security, that may reside in an environmental justice community tract, can utilize this program, though they do not face the externalities of environmental pollution and injustice: while those living next to the environmental pollution and experiencing the most significant consequences, are unable to, due to economic and social barriers, that are not addressed in this bill. The City believes in increasing the rebate for e-bikes and a stronger program that supports low-income individuals in acquiring electric vehicles, throughout the totality of the process of purchasing and paying for this vehicle, is needed to direct these benefits to the residents that face the consequences of air pollution.

While the City agrees with the provisions outlined in Sec 6. Section 22a-202 lines 357-366 and Sec 6. Section 22a-202 lines 386-396, relating to environmental justice communities, the City would like to see stronger and more actionable steps implemented to ensure the rebate program is going to and able to be equitably accessed by residents in the City; specifically environmental justice communities, which typically have lower incomes, English proficiency, and education levels, which all create additional barriers. The bill states the program will be evaluated on its effectiveness and total accrual of benefits to EJ communities, the City would like stronger language to state how the program will be evaluated. The City would like to ensure equity is a main priority for the Advisory Committee and the Commission of Energy and Environmental Protection and would like language added in Sec 6. Section 22a-202 line 314, addressing it. While this is addressed in line 357 of the bill, the City would like a quantifiable metric around the amount or percent being prioritized for EJ Communities. The City would also like the inclusion of language establishing metrics for the report, Sec 6. Section 22a-202 line 400-408, that is produced and presented to the joint standing committees on benefits accruing to environmental communities, and that the approach will be refined for the next cycle if these metrics are not met.

The City would ask for additional language to be included associated with outreach and marketing campaign in Sec 6. Section 22a-202 on Line 409-412, related to the equitable engagement of residents in environmental justice communities, recognizing the economic, social, and linguistic barriers that exist that may make residents unable to participate in the rebate program.

The City believes stronger action needs to be undertaken by the respective bodies in the Legislature to address electrical vehicle charging infrastructure. The City supports the revision to the State Building Code requiring new developments and schools to have electric vehicle charging on at least 10% of available parking spaces. However, as the EV infrastructure relates to private individuals and tenants the City does not support. The City feels that this puts a significant burden on the individual to meet their needs as an electric vehicle owner, where government planning and development is needed. While this is a good way to address the lack of infrastructure, it will most likely result in uneven and concentrated patterns of charging stations, making some places

extremely accessible and others without. Further, it seems to place the burden of maintaining this infrastructure squarely on the tenant, even though a landlords property value would undoubtedly be raised by having EV charging infrastructure on it. The City also does not support the clause allowing organizations that offer have EV charging on 10% of their parking space to not comply with a tenant's request to create one, notwithstanding the other provisions in the bill. In Bridgeport, it would be exceedingly difficult to implement EV charging stations through this model and it is not reflective of the lived and developmental conditions on the ground in a city. The state needs to take a much more proactive and comprehensive approach at planning and siting these EV charging stations to provide access to the community and support a smooth transition away from gas- and diesel-powered vehicles. Instead, this bill puts the onus and ability on individual citizens to develop the infrastructure necessary to adopt electric vehicles.

The City supports and appreciates the establishment of a grant program to provide matching funds for Federal grant applications for electric school buses and would ask for language to be included, prioritizing the grant funds for environmental justice communities, as the language in Sec 15 section 10-220, Section 16 line 736-738, states by 2030 all school buses in EJ communities shall be zero emission.

The City does not support the current composition of the CHEAPR Advisory Board and ask for the following recommendations to be added. The City would like to see three additional seats, in addition to the ones outlined, added to the Advisory Committee: one resident from an environmental justice community/or someone with lived experience in these communities; one for an individual representing bicycle organizations/shops; and one for the PURA Chair.

The City would like the following amendments and recommendations addressed:

- The City would like to see EJ Communities defined by census tract to ensure residents most affected by environmental injustice and pollution are able to access this program. The City would like to see targeted outreach and engagement with EJ Community residents and bike shops located in their communities to inform them of this rebate program. In addition, the City would like to ensure that the materials for this program are being offered in multiple languages and distributed equitably to be accessed by residents in EJ Communities where English is not a primary language.
- Increasing the E-bike threshold to at least $3,500 and raising the rebate for residents in EJ Communities from $500 to $1,000.
- Change the maximum number of rebates an EJ municipality is eligible for from 10 rebates annually to 20 and increasing the total amount to 40, in EJ Communities.
- Add three seats to the Advisory Committee including one for an individual/community member from an EJ Community, one for the PURA Chair, and one representing bicycle organizations and/or bicycle shops.

The City of Bridgeport supports this bill and the amendments, and changes as discussed. We appreciate you examining this issue and ask you to ensure the most vulnerable residents in EJ Communities are able to access these rebate programs as the bill purports.