

# Energy and Technology Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5628

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE STATE'S

**Title:** HYDROPOWER ASSETS.

**Vote Date:** 3/14/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/2/2023

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

[Rep. Bill Buckbee, 67th Dist.](#)

[Rep. Mark W Anderson, 62nd Dist.](#)

## **REASONS FOR THE BILL:**

Connecticut needs to expand its energy infrastructure to satisfy its future energy demands while, concomitantly, finding alternative energy sources to help it reach its zero-carbon goals and renewable targets. The development, procurement, and employment of hydropower assets may benefit both goals. However, further study may be required to assess the potential benefits; hence, the bill proposes a Task Force to study hydropower assets in the state and their potential benefits.

## **REASONS FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

N/A

## **NATURE AND SOURCE OF SUPPORT:**

Francis Pullaro, Executive Director, RENEW Northeast – Supports the bill, noting that small hydropower facilities are the region's oldest carbon-free energy resources. Small hydropower resources in Connecticut are facing the "same economic pressures from the historically low wholesale electricity prices over the past decade" (Francis Pullaro, RENEW Northeast Testimony, March 2, 2023) as the state's nuclear energy resources. RENEW Northeast, therefore, suggests that the proposed task force be required to include recommendations to keep existing hydropower assets in Connecticut viable in their report. The support of the state's small hydropower facilities will provide cost-effective means of providing energy, and it will also provide an alternative source of electricity that will help Connecticut reach its carbon emissions reduction goals under Public Act 22-5.

Steve Zuretti, Senior Director, Brookfield Renewable – Neither supports nor opposes the bill as proposed but highlights the value of small-scale hydropower as a practical and cost-effective means of energy generation in the state with the potential to support the state’s future energy portfolio. Brookfield Renewable recommends that the state consider language to revise the Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) Class I definition to support Connecticut’s existing small-scale hydropower assets. In addition, Brookfield Renewable suggests that the RPS be expanded to allow the eligibility of re-licensed reservoir hydropower and run-of-river hydropower to increase the number of facilities that can participate under the provisions of Class I, increase the cap on re-licensed hydropower that can be used for RPS compliance, and clarify the language regarding the qualifications for re-licensed hydropower facilities.

**NATURE AND SOURCE OF OPPOSITION:**

Margaret Miner, Environmental Consultant – Neither supports nor opposes the bill as proposed, noting that the nature of the task force in question is vague. Ms. Miner expresses concerns over lines 5-6 of the bill, which states that, of the ten members on the proposed task force, only the two appointed by the Speaker of the House “shall have expertise in hydropower” (l. 6, H.B. 5628, 2023). No credentials appear to be required for the other appointees. Ms. Miner also notes that the scope of the study is unclear. Ms. Miner notes that hydropower “assets” include rivers as well as infrastructure and legal agreements; therefore, she recommends that the task force be made up of a multidisciplinary range of experts in disciplines relating to hydropower. The bill should clarify its scope and keep in mind the benefits and contingencies of free-flowing rivers for the public interest and to the market for renewable energy credits in other aspects of the state’s utility portfolio.

Duncan Broatch, Chairperson, CT Small Power Producers Association (CSPPA) –Opposes the bill because a study of hydropower assets in the state will take up time and place an unnecessary burden on taxpayers. CSPPA cites the prior failure of a hydro study bill at the Governor’s desk (2022’s Raised H.B. 5325). CSPPA acknowledges that hydropower is a proven renewable, but Connecticut’s rates have remained relatively uneconomical for further development relative to the other New England states’ available hydropower. CSPPA proposes instead a bill that addresses equitable rates for hydropower. Attached to the testimony is a study on the ‘Status of Hydropower in Connecticut’.

Charles Rosenfield, Putnam Hydropower Inc. – Opposes the bill, noting that a further study of the benefits of the state’s hydropower assets would be a waste of time and resources. Putnam Hydropower Inc. suggests that Connecticut accept that it needs to support its existing hydropower assets as a relatively small but essential part of its energy portfolio. Putnam Hydropower Inc. adds that other states in New England allow hydropower to earn a rate that is more fitting of its value on the electrical grid, for the environment, and in the economy as a renewable energy source. Putnam Hydropower Inc. previously supported H.B. 6236 & 6499.

Rolland Zeleny, President, Energy Stream LLC and Saywatt Hydroelectric LLC –Opposes the bill because it does not directly support Connecticut’s hydropower industry. Rather than conducting a study, which Mr. Zeleny states would be a waste of time and resources, the state should consider expanding the provisions for small hydropower in its Renewable Portfolio Standards to support Connecticut’s existing small hydropower facilities adequately.

In addition, Mr. Zeleny cites the multiple benefits of small hydropower for emissions, rivers, jobs, etc.

**Reported by: Robert Downes**

**Date: March 14, 2023**