

Energy and Technology Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6497

AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF ENERGY DATA COLLECTION AND

Title: PUBLIC ACCESS.

Vote Date: 3/14/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to General Law

PH Date: 3/2/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

[Rep. Jonathan Steinberg, 136th Dist.](#)

[Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.](#)

REASONS FOR BILL:

The State of Connecticut intends to increase public participation in deliberating strategies and policies to direct the state toward its climate goals and renewable energy targets. This Bill seeks to address public participation and transparency by guaranteeing the public access to the data needed to set informed climate targets and accurately monitor progress against such targets. The accessible information established under an energy data access bill of rights would guarantee that residents of the state will have access to high-quality data relevant to the state's climate goals and renewable energy targets, such as the data recorded by OPM on the state's use of heating and electricity usage, or a resident's energy usage data collected by the appropriate service providing electric distribution company.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Claire Coleman, Consumer Counsel, CT Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) – Supports this Bill to create an energy access bill of rights because it would make information regarding the deployment of clean energy in different sectors more accessible to Connecticut's consumers. It would also allow consumers to obtain information on their energy usage from their electric distribution company. The Bill would thus ensure transparency and the availability of reliable information to all of Connecticut's consumers, empowering the public to hold clean energy programs and policies accountable over time, bolstering their efficacy.

Scott Gaul, Chief Data Officer, CT Office of Policy and Management (OPM) – Supports the Bill to establish an energy data access bill of rights and grant the public access to high-quality data relevant to the state's climate goals and renewable targets. Still, OPM expresses concerns about the scope of data identified in the Bill. Therefore, OPM recommends that the

Bill provide provisions such that the data sources (relating to climate goals and renewable energy targets) are made accessible to the public while also addressing any concerns on privacy and confidentiality.

Marissa Gillett, Chairman, CT Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) – Generally supports the Bill, believing that “access to high-quality data is a right of the residents of Connecticut and that it should be treated as such” (Marissa Gillett; PURA Testimony; March 2, 2023). Connecticut residents can utilize data providing insight into the state’s progress towards meeting its statutory climate goals and cost and facility information related to the ratepayer-funded programs and procurements. Ratepayers and local entities can also use data to reduce their carbon footprint and energy expenditures. PURA suggests specific provisions and recommendations, such as adding language requiring the "centralized database" be housed on the Energize CT website.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kenneth Gillingham & Asa Watten, Professor & Post-doctoral Associate, Yale University – Strongly support the Bill because it would increase access to high-quality energy data. The authors cite their use of data on energy and the environment in Connecticut to conduct research in the public interest, including finding answers to such questions how best to encourage the adoption of new technologies or how to assess an area’s unique energy and environmental burdens with more nuance. The authors recommend that historical data be included along with current data.

Jeffrey Gross, Deep River, CT – Supports the Bill because it would support the transparent exchange of technical information in Connecticut’s energy economy. The bill would thus help both state- and town-level planning for adequate and affordable energy resources.

Diane Keefe – Strongly supports the Bill because it would help inform the public and public service organizations by providing high-quality data relevant to the state’s energy goals and renewable targets.

Cary Lynch, Climate and Energy Policy Manager, The Nature Conservancy – Strongly supports the Bill as it will address the current difficulties and costs that agencies, policymakers, municipalities, businesses, residents, and research institutions face when trying to access data relating to the state’s energy goals and renewable targets. The current difficulties and costs of finding data on energy hinder clean energy development. Resolving these issues and improving communication between various actors will help Connecticut transition to a more efficient, clean energy economy. The Nature Conservancy suggests that DEEP assist with collecting such data and making it available to the public.

Shirley McCarthy, Professor, Yale University and Member, Branford Clean Energy Committee – Supports the Bill because access to high-quality data on energy in the state will enable municipalities, residents, institutions, and policymakers to work towards the state’s decarbonization and renewable targets effectively. The Branford Clean Energy Committee suggests that language be added to the bill that would require state agencies to develop a plan and report on making energy data more accessible to the public.

Mark Scully, President, People's Action for Clean Energy (PACE) – Strongly supports the Bill because access to high-quality data on energy in the state will enable municipalities, residents, institutions, and policymakers to work towards the state's decarbonization and renewable targets effectively. In addition, the Bill would ensure that stakeholders make informed decisions about such targets and may be able to monitor their progress in real-time. Therefore, PACE supports the passage of an energy access bill of rights, further suggesting that the Office of Policy and Management, in consultation with the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, the Public Utility Regulatory Authority, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Electric Distribution Companies and representatives from industry and nonprofits agencies develop a plan for making energy data more accessible to the public.

Peter Millman, Vice President, People's Action for Clean Energy (PACE) – Supports the Bill because access to high-quality data on energy in the state will enable municipalities, residents, institutions, and policymakers to work towards the state's decarbonization and renewable targets effectively. In addition, the Bill would ensure that stakeholders make informed decisions about such targets and may be able to monitor their progress in real-time. PACE also acknowledges that New Hampshire enacted a similar bill of their own, S.B. 284, in 2022, a statewide energy data platform.

Bernard Pelletier, Member, People's Action for Clean Energy (PACE) – Supports the bill because access to high-quality data on energy in the state will enable municipalities, residents, institutions, and policymakers to work towards the state's decarbonization and renewable targets effectively. The Bill would ensure that stakeholders make informed decisions about such targets and may be able to monitor their progress in real-time. PACE suggests that OPM develop a plan to bring together a wide array of state agencies, academics, business representatives, environmental groups, and utility companies to build a plan to give the public the data needed to create and monitor the state's collective path to a renewable future.

Deborah Roe, Granby, CT – Supports the bill, noting that providing readily accessible, high-quality energy data will help the state meet its climate and energy goals. Such efficient data access is vital since the current means for accessing data and the data available are insufficient for maximizing the potential of Connecticut's clean energy economy. The resident suggests that towns should send data to a single database and that state agencies should place penalties on data providers that are in non-compliance. They also suggest that a council be created to oversee data collection.

Charles Rothenberger, Climate and Energy Attorney, Save the Sound – Supports the Bill because access to comprehensive, transparent, and high-quality data relating to the state's energy goals and renewable targets is essential to supporting the state's clean energy transition.

Michael Uhl, Business Owner – Supports the Bill as access to energy data is essential for Connecticut's clean energy transition. He suggests OPM develop a plan to make energy data more accessible to the public, noting that centralized planning is to blame for the lack of energy data accessibility. Local communities and residents can work toward more intelligent, better regulations and improved service delivery if provided access to transparent.

Pace, Vincent, Assistant General Counsel, Eversource Energy – Supports the Bill's intention to provide customers with relevant and vital data about their energy usage to make appropriate and informed decisions. Eversource Energy notes that it already provides information to customers through its 'Green Button' program on its website. Eversource recommends removing or clarifying Section 1(b)(6)(B) of the Bill. Compiling and sharing their customers' data with third parties would be burdensome for their administration. They suggest that customers should be able to share their data at their discretion.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed

Reported by: Gregory Chipchak & Robert Downes

Date: 3/16/23