

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-979  
AN ACT PROMOTING ENERGY AFFORDABILITY, ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND  
**Title:** GREEN CITIES.  
**Vote Date:** 3/10/2023  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute  
**PH Date:** 2/27/2023  
**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Environment Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To implement the Governor's budget recommendations

## **Substitute Language-LCO5739**

Removed provisions regarding solicitations for certain energy facilities by DEEP, removed shrink code authorization, removed website link requirement regarding home energy labels, removed certain HVAC board training requirements and revised green cities provision to refer to certain sized cities and environmental justice communities.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection**

The Commissioner testified that SB 979 includes critical provisions that will lower electricity bills for ratepayers, advance Connecticut's climate commitments by helping decarbonize buildings and the power sector and address environmental justice by rectifying inequities in urban tree cover. This legislation will further ensure Connecticut is able to take advantage of federal funding under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act.

### **Claire Coleman, Consumer Counsel, CT Office of Consumer Counsel**

The CT Office of Consumer Counsel supports SB 979 because from a consumer perspective, this is an incredibly important proposal because as a result of energy efficiency measures price reductions are passed on to all customers as lower rates.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Justin Elicker, Mayor, City of New Haven**

Mayor Elicker supports SB 979 Section 2, which would give renters visibility into the energy costs associated with rental units by establishing an energy grading system for rentals, and Section 4, which would empower municipalities to adopt zero energy building codes governing the construction of new residential and commercial buildings.

### **Nathan Frohling, Director of External Affairs, The Nature Conservancy**

The Nature Conservancy strongly supports SB 979. Each of the measures in this bill provide important, effective and meaningful support to our mission in addressing climate change by reducing global greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council**

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council supports SB 979 especially Section 7 of the bill which would establish a goal for Connecticut of increasing forest cover by 5% in environmental justice communities by 2040. Investments in tree planting and urban forestry will build upon DEEP grant programs that seek to address the inequities not only in where trees and greenspaces are located, but also in the associated health inequities for people living in our urban areas with the highest poverty rates.

### **Francis Pickering, Executive Director, WestCOG**

They testified on Section 4 of the bill, which they support but suggest two additions to the bill:

1. Work with lenders to provide energy efficient mortgages. An EEM accounts for the savings that result from lower utility bills in an energy-efficient property.
2. Allow municipalities to adopt modern standards for water efficiency. Municipalities in Western Connecticut are running up against limits in drinking water supply and wastewater treatment capacity.

### **Douglas Presley, Policy and Regulatory Affairs Manager, Dandelion Energy**

Dandelion Energy supports SB 979. Dandelion Energy is a residential geothermal heat pump company. Geothermal heat pump systems are the most energy efficient way to heat and cool. They are strongly supportive of Sections 5 and 6 because they establish minimum standards for professionals, electricians, and plumbers, providing an important workforce development step toward improving familiarity with heat pumps.

### **Charles Rothenberger, Climate & Energy Attorney, Save the Sound**

Save the Sound supports all of measures contained in SB 979.

Extend DEEP's authority to procure competitively electric transmission services and infrastructure to secure more affordable, clean energy for the grid, enabling the State to take advantage of federal funding for transmission. 2. Require landlords to provide a home energy label when they list homes or apartments for rent. 3. Require electricians and plumbers to include some hours on non-fossil-fuel, nonelectric-resistance technologies in their next round of continuing education. 4. Authorize municipalities to adopt a "stretch" building code that requires greater energy efficiencies and incorporation of renewable energy for buildings than the statewide building code. 5. Establish adequate tree canopy coverage in low-income communities.

**Peter Shattuck, President New England, Anbaric Development Partners**

Anbaric supports SB 979. Anbaric develops clean energy projects that supply renewable energy to customers and projects that optimize the power grid using energy storage. Anbaric is developing multiple projects in the Northeast, including projects to interconnect offshore wind directly into Connecticut. Competitive procurement of transmission by Connecticut is a sound and proven approach. Procuring transmission competitively produces consumer savings. Investments in transmission can enable Connecticut to access world-class offshore wind resources and other renewables located distant from load centers.

**Al Carbone, State Government Relations, United Illuminating/AVANGRID**

UI/Avangrid is generally supportive of SB 979 but has some specific concerns with some of the bill language which is overly broad by not defining where DEEP's procurement efforts should be targeted. The region already has a regional transmission planning process for reliability, economic and public policy transmission projects under ISO New England's tariff.

**Ann Gadwah, Advocacy & Outreach Organizer, Sierra Club**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports SB 979 which proposes several important things to promote clean energy, sustainable buildings, energy efficiency and urban tree coverage.

**Vincent Pace, Assistant General Counsel, Eversource Energy**

Eversource supports SB 979 but has concerns in Section 1 about the broad scope of the solicitation as drafted in this section. It will likely trigger unintended consequences such as creating risks, increasing cost and delaying key objectives of Connecticut customers.

**Nancy Bowden, Bloomfield, CT**

Ms. Bowden supports SB 979. She is a member of CT Advanced Master Gardener's. She feels this bill can have tremendous benefits for low wealth communities which have long suffered the worst of climate change impact

Several speakers sent in testimony in support of SB 963 An Act Promoting Energy Affordability, Efficiency and Green Cities. They believe this bill targets 4 important measures to lower electricity bills, help Connecticut's commitments to climate change and address environmental justice by rectifying inequities in urban tree cover.

**Laura Bozzi, Director of Programs-Yale Center of Climate Change**

**Kathy Fay, Vice Chair, The New Haven Environmental Advisory Council**

**Aziz Dehkan, Executive Director, Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs**

**Alicia Dolce, Executive Director, CT Green Building Council**

**Elliot Glassman, Stamford Climate Council**

**William Freeman, Celebration Development Group**

**Gannon Long, Public Affairs Director, Operation Fuel**

**Ana McMonigle, Staff Attorney, Conservation Law Foundation**

**Denise Savageau, President, Connecticut Assoc. of Conservation Districts**

**Tom Swan, Executive Director, CCAG**

**Over 40 Connecticut Residents sent in testimony Supporting SB 979**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Leslie Anderson, President & CEO, Propane Gas Association of New England**

The Propane Gas Association of New England oppose SB 979 because of the number of concerns they have in the way the bill is presently written. Section 4 would allow municipalities to adopt their own building codes based on emission, which is basically a ban on traditional fuels and heating equipment. Propane is already cleaner than electricity in CT. They are working to develop renewable propane from multiple sources. Renewable propane energy is already being added to conventional propane. Section 5 of the bill amends current law to require continuing education for licensed HVAC technicians who already have knowledge and experience with all types of heating systems including electric heat pumps. They are also concerned about the language in section 2 that would allow DEEP to a "Connecticut home energy label". Allowing DEEP to create boutique standards that only apply to Connecticut, that depart from national standards, will not serve the public.

**Gina Calabro, Executive Director, AIA Connecticut**

AIA opposes SB 979 as written. They believe SB 979 is a step in the right direction, but it is important to ensure it is a comprehensive regulatory process. They recommend that IECC be an automatic adoption in the Connecticut state building code. They believe renewable energy should not be a requirement. They are in line with CT Green Building Council and there are problems if a stretch code is implemented.

**David Donnell, Associate Director, American Petroleum Institute**

The American Petroleum Institute opposes Section 4 of SB 979. While compliance with zero energy building provisions of 2021 International Energy Conservation Code neither requires or allows mandatory electrification, the International Code Council regards transition from fossil-based fuels used in buildings to strictly on-site electricity as a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and its further development of the International Energy Conservation Coded may include such "preceptive-based pathways. We need to preserve consumer choice and there could be significant cost and reliability concerns.

**Jim Heckman, General Counsel, CT Realtors Association**

The CTR has specific concerns on two sections of SB 979. The association oppose home energy labels. An Energy Score is not a reflection of affordability. Energy costs are often a function of what type of heat may be in the property and most importantly, the consumption of the renters. CTR also opposes the imposition of stretch codes. CTR believes stretch codes will make it harder to build affordable housing in towns where they are adopted. There cannot be affordable homes when there are new expensive building mandates. As an alternative, we suggest Connecticut could provide tax incentives or grants to builders of new homes with energy efficient standards beyond what is required in existing code.

**Chis Herb, President, Connecticut Energy Marketers Association**

CEMA opposes sections 2, 4 and 5 of SB 979. Biodiesel and renewable propane reduce our reliance on the electric grid. Requiring heat pumps to be installed in all new construction will increase demand on an already fragile electric grid. We should not make the mistake by trying to guess which technology and fuel can achieve net zero emissions. They have concerns regarding "Connecticut home energy label". Energy consumption is a result of several different drivers – efficiency of the heating/cooling system, home performance (i.e., weatherization), weather, and the behavior of the occupants. They also oppose section 5 because Licensed HVAC technicians already have the knowledge and experience to install electric heat pumps.

**Jim Perras, CEO, Home Builders & Remodelers Assoc. of Connecticut**

The Home Builders & Remodelers Assoc. of Connecticut oppose SB 979. The Association appreciates the intent of the bill to build more resilient communities and work towards existing carbon reduction goals. However, as written, SB 979 will negatively impact housing production and exacerbate the growing housing accessibility crisis. Many multifamily developers do not use CHFA financing. Those private sector developers that do not use CHFA funding will be discouraged from bringing more dense and diverse housing to those towns that chose to implement these new regulations.

**Ashley Zane, Government Affairs Associate, CBIA**

CBIA opposes SB 979. CBIA has concerns with allowing municipalities to adopt their own "stretch" building codes. Additionally, CBIA supports an incentive-based approach to decarbonization efforts and has concerns surrounding new continuing education requirements for plumbers and electricians.

Several people submitted testimony in Opposition of SB 979 An Act Promoting Energy Affordability, Energy Efficiency and Green Cities. Most of the opposition was to Sections 2, 4 and 5 of these bills as written.

**Bob DeCosmo, Manager, The CT Property Owners Alliance**

**David Gable, President, Hocon Gas**

**Kenneth Mita, Central Connecticut Construction Management**

**Chris Nelson, Nelson Construction, Inc**

**Peter Zvinglas, Manager of Inspection Services, Town of Groton**

**Robert Wiedenmann, President, Sunwood Development Corp**

**Over 20 Connecticut Residents sent in testimony in opposition to SB 979**

**Reported by: Judith Ganswindt**

**Date: March 21, 2023**

