



**HOME BUILDERS & REMODELERS ASSOCIATION
OF CONNECTICUT, INC.**

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Is Our
Business*

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Public Hearing Testimony
March 8, 2024**

To: Chairpersons Lopes and Gresko, Ranking Members Harding and Callahan, distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

From: Jim Perras, HBRA-CT CEO

Regarding H.B. No. 5004 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CERTAIN CLIMATE CHANGE MEASURES.

The Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Connecticut (HBRA-CT) is a professional trade association with nearly 800 hundred business members statewide, employing tens of thousands of Connecticut residents. Our association of small businesses is comprised of residential and commercial builders, land developers, remodelers, general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and those businesses and professionals that provide services to our diverse industry. We build between 70% to 80% of all new homes and apartments in Connecticut each year and engage in countless home remodeling projects.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 5004. The HBRA of CT applauds the Environment Committee for attempting to craft a bill that, in large part, puts the horse first, and the cart second, by seeking data to inform what will likely be far reaching and substantive legislation down the road. This forward-thinking approach is the best and only way to tackle climate change without causing potentially significant unintended consequences —such as exacerbating CT’s growing housing crisis.

Some of the bill’s provisions are still of concern to the HBRA of CT. For instance, Section. 6 calls for regulators to begin the process of banning natural gas as an energy option before garnering scientific and economic proof that the State’s grid can handle it and our residents can pay for it. Similarly, Sec. 16 requires DEEP to submit a report with implementation dates for full electrification of HVAC systems without a parallel examination of the return on investment, consumer costs, and impacts on the economy, electric grid, and housing. **As such, the HBRA of CT would urge that all studies and data collection provisions found in HB 5004 also consider housing affordability and accessibility, length of time regarding the return on investment, construction costs, and disparate impacts on disadvantaged communities.** This would be an important safeguard against the rising cost of regulations while ensuring only the most pragmatic and effective environmental solutions are pursued.

We see great promise in heat pumps, but they are not the only solution, nor the silver bullet they are often held out to be. Can sufficient units be purchased to satisfy some of these rigid

implementation dates? Are the workforce measures sufficient to deploy the people to install and maintain them? Sec. 11 establishes a CT Clean Economy Council and compels it to work with the Office of Workforce Strategy to increase workforce training in the clean energy sector. **The HBRA would strongly recommend that this bill be amended to direct the Council and the OWS, together with our state's licensed trades associations, to study how the state's antiquated journeyman to apprentice ratio requirement is keeping the licensed trades from hiring the number of apprentices needed to grow the residential construction workforce to meet the needs of a clean economy and to make legislative recommendations.**

We urge the Committee to work with us to craft a bill that considers these very real issues—cultivating a young, experienced workforce is crucial to effectively achieving climate change goals, which is why HBRA has made it one of our top priorities over the last several years.

These honorable, aspirational goals are doomed to fail if we don't work through these thorny, real-world issues together instead of imposing arbitrary, potentially costly, and unworkable deadlines on ourselves. Let's do this together, methodically with all the affected parties around the table. HBRA pledges to be first in line for this challenge and offers whatever resources and expertise we have in our arsenal.

For these reasons the HBRA respectfully requests that the Environment Committee pass House Bill 5004 with JFS language to address the needs of the HBRA of CT prior to passage.