Proposed Substitute Bill No. 5004

LCO No. **6364**

AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES AND ASSOCIATED JOB SECTORS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) In the aggregate, state agencies shall have the following greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals: (1) A forty-five per cent reduction from 2001 levels by 2030; (2) a seventy per cent reduction from 2016 levels by 2040; and (3) achieving a level determined to be net-zero by 2050.

(b) Such state agencies shall have the goal of only utilizing zero-carbon generating electricity by 2030.

(c) Such state agencies may use the social cost of greenhouse gas emissions when evaluating the costs and benefits of activities and improvements to the facilities of such agencies to meet the goals in this section. For purposes of this section, "social cost" includes, but is not limited to, net agricultural productivity, harms to human health, property damage and the value of ecosystem services.

(d) Not later than January 1, 2026, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall publish guidelines for such state agencies on the social cost of greenhouse gas emissions on the department's Internet web site.

Sec. 2. Section 22a-200a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) The state shall reduce the level of emissions of greenhouse gas:

(1) Not later than January 1, 2020, to a level at least ten per cent below the level emitted in 1990;

(2) Not later than January 1, 2030, to a level at least forty-five per cent below the level emitted in 2001;

(3) Not later than January 1, 2040, to a level at least sixty-five per cent below the level emitted in 2001, including to a level of zero per cent from electricity supplied to electric customers in the state;

(4) Not later than January 1, 2050, to **[**a level**]** an economy-wide net-zero level, provided direct and indirect emissions of greenhouse gases are at least eighty per cent below the level emitted in 2001; and

(5) All of the levels referenced in this subsection shall be determined by the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection.

(b) On or before January 1, 2010, and biannually thereafter, the state agencies that are members of the Governor's Steering Committee on Climate Change shall submit a report to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection. The report shall identify existing and proposed activities and improvements to the facilities of such agencies that are designed to meet state agency energy savings goals established by the Governor. The report shall also identify policies and regulations that could be adopted in the near future by such agencies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with subsection (a) of this section.

(c) **[**Not later than January 1, 2012, and every three years thereafter, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall, in consultation with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the Governor's Steering Committee on Climate Change, report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters

relating to the environment, energy and transportation on the quantifiable emissions reductions achieved pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. The report shall include a schedule of proposed regulations, policies and strategies designed to achieve the limits of greenhouse gas emissions imposed by said subsection, an assessment of the latest scientific information and relevant data regarding global climate change and the status of greenhouse gas emission reduction efforts in other states and countries.**]** The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall, not later than January 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, publish an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions sources and carbon sequestered to (1) establish a baseline for such emissions for the state, and (2) report on the quantifiable emissions reductions and carbon sequestration achieved in pursuit of the greenhouse gas emissions levels specified in this section.

(d) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall, not later than January 1, 2026, and not more than every three years thereafter, in consultation with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the Governor's Council on Climate Change, produce a report, with an opportunity for public comment, on the quantifiable emissions reductions and carbon sequestration achieved in pursuit of the greenhouse gas emissions levels specified in this section. The report shall include (1) a schedule of proposed regulations, policies and strategies designed to achieve the limits of greenhouse gas emissions specified in this section, by the relevant date provided, (2) an assessment of the latest scientific information and relevant data regarding global climate change, and (3) the status of greenhouse gas emission reduction efforts in other states and countries. Such proposed regulations, policies and strategies may include carbon sequestration. The commissioner may engage a consultant to assist in preparing such report or portions of such report. The commissioner shall submit said report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment, energy and technology and transportation.

[(d)**]** (e) At least one year prior to the effective date of any federally mandated greenhouse cap and trade program including greenhouse gas emissions subject to any state cap and trade requirements adopted pursuant to this section, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment, energy and technology and transportation. Such report shall explain the differences between such federal and state requirements and shall identify any further regulatory or legislative actions needed to achieve consistency with such federal program.

Sec. 3. Section 22a-200b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

[(a) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall, with the advice and assistance of a nonprofit association organized to provide scientific, technical, analytical and policy support to the air quality and climate programs of northeastern states: (1) Not later than December 1, 2009, publish an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions to establish a baseline for such emissions for the state and publish a summary of greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies on the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Internet web site, (2) not later than July 1, 2010, publish results of various modeling scenarios concerning greenhouse gas emissions, including, but not limited to, an evaluation of the potential economic and environmental benefits and opportunities for economic growth based on such scenarios, (3) not later than July 1, 2011, analyze greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies and, after an opportunity for public comment, make recommendations on which such strategies will achieve the greenhouse gas emission levels specified in section 22a-200a, and (4) not later than July 1, 2012, and every three years thereafter, develop, with an opportunity for public comment, a schedule of recommended regulatory actions by relevant agencies, policies and other actions

necessary to show reasonable further progress towards achieving the greenhouse gas emission levels specified in section 22a-200a.

(b)**]** The commissioner may adopt regulations, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, to implement the provisions of **[**this section**]** subsection (d) of section 22a-200a, as amended by this act. Nothing in section 4a-67h, 22a-200 or 22a-200a, as amended by this act, or this section shall limit a state agency from adopting any regulation within its authority in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54.

Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2026, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority shall initiate an uncontested proceeding regarding the future of the natural gas distribution system in the state in relation to the provisions of section 22a-200a of the general statutes, as amended by this act. Such proceeding shall include, but need not be limited to, the consideration and implementation of beneficial electrification measures such as geothermal systems and heat pumps, the integration of natural gas and electric company joint planning processes, transparent accounting for the full costs and benefits of energy systems infrastructure, consideration of the disproportionate burdens placed on environmental justice communities, as defined in section 22a-20a of the general statutes, and consideration of ratepayer impacts presented in any scenario. Such proceeding shall also give consideration to maximizing the efficiency, ratepayer value and other benefits of the existing natural gas distribution system. Upon completion of such uncontested proceeding, said authority shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment and energy and technology on any recommendations for legislative changes necessary to implement the findings of such docket.

Sec. 5. Subdivision (3) of subsection (c) of section 32-7t of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(3) The commissioner, upon consideration of an application and any additional information, may approve an application in whole or in part or may approve an application with amendments, provided the commissioner may give preference to applications that: (A) Make significant investments in environmentally sustainable practices, including, but not limited to, zero-carbon energy and energy efficiency, (B) are in sectors of the economy such as renewable energy, energy efficiency and zero-emission vehicles, or (C) are for farming operations that are sustainable from a climate perspective. If the commissioner disapproves an application, the commissioner shall identify the defects in such application and explain the specific reasons for the disapproval. The commissioner shall render a decision on an application not later than ninety days after the date of its receipt by the commissioner.

Sec. 6. (*Effective from passage*) The Secretary of the State shall provide a voucher for the amount of any registration or renewal fee for a benefit corporation, as defined in section 33-1351 of the general statutes, provided such corporation submits proof to the secretary that the corporation meets the parameters of a benefit corporation, as defined in section 33-1351 of the general statutes.

Sec. 7. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a Connecticut Clean Economy Council that shall advise on economic development strategies and policies that strengthen the state's climate mitigation, clean energy, resilience and sustainability programs, in particular for vulnerable communities, as defined in section 16-243y of the general statutes.

(b) Such council shall meet not less than quarterly, at dates, times and locations to be established by the cochairpersons of such council. The council shall: (1) Identify opportunities to leverage state and federal funding to scale economic development and workforce opportunities associated with climate mitigation, clean energy, resilience and sustainability investments, (2) serve as a central coordinating body for climate mitigation, clean energy, resilience and sustainability workforce

efforts and opportunities statewide for a technically advanced, enduring labor force, (3) develop economic development and workforce strategies that support investment and growth of climate mitigation, clean energy, resilience and sustainability job growth, and (4) advise the Governor on any state-wide economic or workforce action plan in clean energy, climate and sustainability.

(c) Such council shall develop a plan to facilitate the transition of workers from fossil-fuel-based employment to clean economy jobs consistent with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section. Such plan shall be submitted not later than July 1, 2026, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment, energy and technology and commerce, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

(d) Such council shall be composed of the following members: (1) The Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, or the commissioner's designee, who shall also serve as a cochairperson of the council, (2) the Chief Workforce Officer, or said officer's designee, who shall also serve as a cochairperson of the council, (3) the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, or the commissioner's designee, who shall also serve as cochairperson of the council, (4) the Commissioner of Transportation, or the commissioner's designee, (5) the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's designee, (6) a representative from the office of the Governor, (7) the chief executive officer of the Connecticut Green Bank, or the chief executive officer's designee, (8) the chief executive officer of Connecticut Innovations, Incorporated, or the chief executive officer's designee, (9) the Labor Commissioner, or the commissioner's designee, (10) the Commissioner of Consumer Protection, or the commissioner's designee, (11) one member appointed by the Chief Workforce Officer who shall be a representative of a regional workforce development board, (12) one member appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, (13) one member appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, (14) one member appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, (15) one

member appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, (16) one member appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, (17) one member appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, and (18) any other member so designated by the cochairpersons. Members appointed pursuant to subdivisions (12) to (17), inclusive, of this subsection shall have one or more of the following backgrounds or qualifications: (A) Be a member of the Connecticut Technical Education Career System, (B) be a representative of a nonprofit organization that focuses on helping people overcome barriers to workforce participation, (C) have expertise in hiring and training employees in the trades related to green technologies, (D) be a representative of a higher education institution and have expertise in technical education, or (E) be a member of the Connecticut State Building Trades Council. Any member appointed pursuant to subdivision (18) of this subsection shall serve at the pleasure of the cochairpersons of the council.

(e) A majority of the members of the council shall constitute a quorum.

(f) The cochairpersons shall, in addition to their general duties, have the following specific responsibilities: The cochairperson from the Department of Economic and Community Development shall lead the activities specified in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this section and The cochairperson from the Office of Workforce Strategy shall lead the activities specified in subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section.

(g) Not later than February 15, 2026, and biannually thereafter, the council shall report on its work, findings and recommendations to the Governor, the Office of Policy and Management, and the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment, energy and technology, higher education and commerce, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 8. Section 31-3rr of the general statutes is repealed and the

following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) As used in this section and section 10a-55g:

(1) "Green jobs" has the same meaning as provided in section 10a-55d;

(2) "Green technology" has the same meaning as provided in section 10a-55d; and

(3) "Career ladder" means a description of the progression from an entry level position to higher levels of pay, skill, responsibility or authority.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2020, the Connecticut Clean Economy Council, in consultation with the Office of Higher Education, Department of Education, Labor Department, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, regional workforce development boards and employers, shall, within available appropriations, identify a career ladder for jobs in the green technology industry, including, but not limited to, a listing of (1) careers at each level of the green technology industry and the requisite level of education and the salary offered for such career, (2) all course, certificate and degree programs in green jobs offered by technical education and career schools within the Technical Education and Career System and institutions of higher education in the state, and (3) jobs available in the green technology industry in the state. The Connecticut Clean Economy Council shall update the green jobs career ladder established pursuant to this section on an as needed basis.

[(c) Not later than January 1, 2024, the Connecticut Clean Economy Council shall develop a plan for green jobs workforce training to accomplish the greenhouse gas emissions goals set forth in subsection (a) of section 22a-200a. Such plan shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) development of work-based learning programs for green jobs with workforce shortages; (2) development of certificate and degree programs related to the green technology industry at technical education and career schools and institutions of higher education in the

state; (3) identification of available funding, whether from a public or private source, to fund the development of such work-based learning and certificate and degree programs and provide grants to apprentices and students; and (4) a strategy to market and recruit individuals, especially from underrepresented populations, to existing and newly developed green jobs work-based learning programs and certificate and degree programs related to the green technology industry at job centers, technical education and career schools and institutions of higher education. Not later than January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, said council shall update such plan as necessary.

(d) Not later than February 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, the Connecticut Clean Economy Council shall submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to higher education and employment advancement the plan developed or updated pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.**]**

Sec. 9. Subsection (b) of section 10-283 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(b) Notwithstanding the application date requirements of this section, at any time within the limit of available grant authorization and within the limit of appropriated funds, the Commissioner of Administrative Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education, may approve applications for grants and make payments for such grants, for any of the following reasons: **[**(A)**]** (1) To assist school building projects to remedy damage from fire and catastrophe, **[**(B)**]** (2) to correct safety, health and other code violations, **[**(C)**]** (3) to replace roofs, including the replacement or installation of skylights as part of the roof replacement project, **[**(D)**]** (4) to remedy a certified school indoor air quality emergency, **[**(E)**]** (5) to install insulation for exterior walls and attics, or **[**(F)**]** (6) to purchase and install a limited use and limited access elevator, windows, photovoltaic panels, air source or

ground source heat pumps, wind generation systems, building management systems or portable classroom buildings, provided portable classroom building projects shall not create a new facility or cause an existing facility to be modified so that the portable buildings comprise a substantial percentage of the total facility area, as determined by the commissioner.

Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2025*) (a) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall develop a plan for the installation of efficient heat pumps for affordable heating and cooling systems in the state.

(b) Such plan shall provide for the availability of affordable heat pump options, with a focus on heat pump applications that have the greatest potential benefits, including, but not limited to, lowering consumers' energy costs, reducing impacts to the electric grid, and improving building resilience, including, but not limited to: (1) Residences in environmental justice communities, as defined in section 22a-20a of the general statutes, and long-term care facilities where not less than eighty per cent of such residents are Medicaid recipients in good financial standing with the state, (2) access to energy efficient, affordable air conditioning for residents experiencing high energy bills and health risks during heat waves, (3) increased resilience during extreme heat events for homes and businesses, (4) improved flood resilience for homes and businesses by enabling home heating systems to be located above ground, (5) low or no interest loans to replace heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment to residences impacted by extreme weather events, (6) cost savings and potential benefits for transitioning from electric resistance heating, (7) analysis of accelerating the adoption of heat pump water heaters, including public education and the possible need for contractor incentives, and (8) potential for a demand response program. Such plan shall describe how the state could best utilize any available or future grant or loan funding. Not later than January 1, 2027, the commissioner shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,

to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment and energy and technology on the status of such plan and any recommendations for expanding or revising such plan.

Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Administrative Services, in consultation with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, shall develop a model policy or guidelines for environmentally sustainable purchasing that municipalities may voluntarily utilize and implement. Such policy or guidelines shall include, but need not be limited to, a list of any state contracts for sustainable purchasing that allow for municipal participation. The Commissioner of Administrative Services shall post such policy or guidelines on the Internet web site of the Department of Administrative Services not later than January 1, 2026.

Sec. 12. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2026, the Department of Administrative Services, in consultation with the Office of Policy and Management, the Departments of Energy and Environmental Protection and Transportation, and any other state agency deemed necessary by the Commissioner of Administrative Services, shall establish a process for said commissioner to consider when making any decision to remodel, alter, repair, construct or enlarge any state real asset, pursuant to section 4b-51 of the general statutes, the capability of such state real asset to: (1) Increase energy efficiency, (2) utilize zero-carbon heating and cooling and water heating alternatives, (3) utilize Class I renewable energy, as defined in section 16-1 of the general statutes, (4) facilitate electric vehicle charging, (5) reduce energy use, and (6) serve as a resilience hub.

(b) Not later than July 1, 2027, the Department of Administrative Services, in consultation with the Office of Policy and Management and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, shall develop a plan and a budget to retrofit existing fossil fuel-based heating and cooling systems at state buildings to systems capable of being operated

without carbon-emitting fuels. Such plan and budget shall be submitted, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment and energy and technology.

Sec. 13. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall evaluate how to integrate and advance nature-based solutions in the state that support climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity through (1) the microgrid and resilience grant and loan pilot program authorized pursuant to section 16-243y of the general statutes, (2) the open space and watershed land acquisition program authorized pursuant to sections 7-131d to 7-131k, inclusive, of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and (3) other applicable state and federal programs administered by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection that advance nature-based solutions, including, but not limited to, (A) federal Clean Water Act programs, (B) the Long Island Sound Study program, and (C) the Urban Forestry program. The department's efforts to advance such nature-based solutions shall be known as the nature-based solutions initiative.

(b) The commissioner shall, as part of such evaluation, consider best practices that encourage the use of the state's ecosystems to naturally sequester and store carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase biodiversity and protect against climate change impacts including: (1) Increasing carbon sequestration through increased forest acreage, including reforestation, (2) controlling invasive species, (3) encouraging soil health across all landscapes, (4) protecting carbon stocks through avoiding the conversion of forests and wetlands to other purposes, (5) restoring habitats to improve biodiversity, (6) increasing climate-smart agriculture and soil conservation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while improving habitat and protecting biodiversity, (7) increasing community resilience by improving water quality and addressing flooding and drought through nature-based stormwater management

and shoreline protection that uses nature-based approaches such as living shorelines, (8) improving air quality and reducing urban heat island effects through urban forestry and increasing green spaces, and (9) increase access to open space for public health benefits.

(c) Not later than July 1, 2026, the commissioner shall post such nature-based solutions initiative program evaluation on the department's Internet web site for review and written comment. As part of that evaluation, the commissioner shall seek review and input from the Departments of Agriculture, Public Health, Housing, Transportation, the Insurance Department, the Connecticut Green Bank and the Office of Policy and Management. In addition, the commissioner shall host one listening session before such nature-based solutions initiative is so posted in order to seek public comment.

Sec. 14. (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 15, 2027, the chairperson of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority shall submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, the results of a study to develop a solar canopy strategic plan and program design to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to energy and technology. The plan shall identify opportunities for solar canopies in the state and shall prioritize the development of solar canopies in environmental justice communities, as defined in section 22a-20a of the general statutes. The plan shall include an examination of different ways to promote solar canopies and shall include recommendations for policies, programs or regulations to promote the construction of solar canopies in the state, consistent with the greenhouse gas reduction goals established in section 22a-200a of the general statutes, as amended by this act.

Sec. 15. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, not later than February 1, 2026, submit to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having

cognizance of matters relating to the environment and energy and technology, a report with recommended regulations, policies and strategies that can significantly lower energy costs for families and businesses, increase community resilience to extreme weather events, including, but not limited to, flooding and extreme heat and contribute to the greenhouse gas emissions reductions required in section 22a-200a of the general statutes, as amended by this act. Such report may utilize modeling scenarios concerning greenhouse gas emissions. The commissioner may engage a consultant to assist in preparing the report or portions thereof.

Sec. 16. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) For the purposes of this section:

(1) "Utility-scale renewable thermal energy network" means distribution infrastructure (A) established for the purpose of providing thermal energy for space heating and cooling, domestic hot water production, refrigeration, thermal energy storage or commercial and industrial processes requiring heating or cooling, and (B) effected through interconnections between one or more renewable thermal energy resources, which may be owned by multiple parties, and between these resources and heat pumps in multiple buildings owned by multiple parties; and

(2) "Renewable thermal energy" means (A) ambient heating or cooling provided, absorbed or stored by geothermal wells, boreholes or other noncombusting, non-fossil-fuel-consuming, nonnuclear thermal resources, or (B) thermal energy otherwise lost to the atmosphere or other environmental compartment as waste heat.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of title 16 of the general statutes, not later than twelve months after passage of this section, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority shall initiate a proceeding to establish a program for development of utility-scale renewable thermal energy networks by gas companies, as defined in section 16-1 of the general statutes. In establishing said program, the authority shall develop

parameters for such networks, procedures or filing proposals for such networks and a standardized data collection system enabling the authority and the public to track the status and performance of utility-scale renewable thermal energy networks developed pursuant to this section.

(c) The authority shall structure the utility-scale renewable thermal energy network program in the best interest of ratepayers of public service companies, as defined in section 16-1 of the general statutes. For purposes of this section, a determination of the best interest of ratepayers shall be based on an analysis of the reasonableness of the size, scope, scale and character of the project and related budget and the costs and benefits of the project, including, but not limited to: (1) Avoided long-term energy and infrastructure investments in extending or maintaining gas infrastructure; (2) the anticipated contribution of such projects to alleviation of seasonal strains on the state's natural gas supply and electric distribution system; (3) consumer protections and benefits for end users of the project; (4) adherence to best practices emerging from thermal energy network programs and project designs developed in other states or elsewhere in the state; (5) adherence to workforce development practices, including the adoption of wage standards pursuant to section 31-53 of the general statutes, and the use of registered apprentice programs approved by the Labor Department; (6) potential for accrual of capital and operational cost savings via interconnection with other existing or future thermal energy networks; (7) improvements in air quality in the buildings and neighborhoods served by the project; (8) reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to contribute to achieving the emissions reductions set forth in section 22a-200a of the general statutes, as amended by this act; and (9) the potential rate impact on any class of ratepayers, including a distributional equity analysis that details the benefits and burdens on any such class of ratepayers. The authority may approve a utility-scale renewable thermal energy network proposal that meets the parameters established under the program.

(d) The authority shall create a pilot component of the utility-scale renewable thermal energy network program that requires each gas company to file with the authority, for its review and approval, proposals for not less than one and not more than two pilot projects for the development of utility-scale renewable thermal energy networks that meet the program parameters established in subsection (c) of this section. The authority shall review a proposal for a pilot project based on the program parameters contained in subsection (c) of this section and on the basis of the project's ability to provide insights into the potential for scaling up future deployment of thermal energy networks in Connecticut, for improving the performance of such networks, and for bringing down the cost of broader deployment of such networks.

(e) The authority shall require projects submitted to the utility-scale renewable thermal energy network program for approval to include a proposed rate structure for thermal energy services supplied to network end users as well as consumer-protection plans for end users. The authority may approve the proposed rate structure if the projected heating and cooling costs for end users is not greater than the heating and cooling costs the end users would be projected to incur if they had not participated.

(f) The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority shall consider the appropriate cost recovery methodology for incentives established pursuant to this section as part of the proceeding established pursuant to section 4 of this act.

(g) A gas company may meet its obligation under subsection (b) of section 16-20 of the general statutes through a project approved by the authority pursuant to this section.

(h) The authority shall ensure transparency and validity of the outcomes of the projects developed pursuant to this section through third-party evaluation of the data the authority collects through its standardized data collection requirement.

(i) Nothing in this section shall prohibit a municipality from developing, owning or maintaining a utility-scale renewable thermal energy network.

(j) As part of the utility-scale renewable thermal energy network program, the authority shall establish a working group on thermal energy networks, comprising representatives of the staffs of the authority, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Connecticut Green Bank, the gas and electric companies, the Connecticut State Building Trades Council and environmental nongovernmental organizations.

(k) As part of the utility-scale renewable thermal energy network program, the authority shall, through the working group established under subsection (j) of this section, undertake a study or studies assessing the potential breadth of deployment of thermal energy networks in Connecticut. Said study shall address factors including, but not limited to: (1) Technical feasibility; (2) economic feasibility, taking into account the potential for: (A) Reduction in energy costs of the customer that is the off-taker of the system; (B) reduction in network capital costs as the scale of deployments increases; (C) reduction in capital and operating costs as thermal energy networks are interconnected; (D) avoided cost of expanding and maintaining portions of the gas-distribution system; (E) minimization of the cost of expanding the electricity-distribution system to facilitate increasing electrification of thermal loads; (F) reduction in per-kilowatt-hour cost of supplying electricity as more electricity is sold; (G) state and federal financial incentives available; (H) employing and advancing the skills of gas-utility workers; (I) providing the gas utility companies a business model not dependent on continued use of combustion of fossil fuels; and (J) improvement of air quality; (3) deployment strategies to maximize the scope, minimize the cost, and equitably allocate the cost of thermal energy networks, including systematic identification of significant sources of waste heat across the state; (4) considerations regarding: (A) Deployment in low and moderate-income communities, (B) deployment

in environmental justice communities, (C) deployment in new residential and commercial construction versus deployment in retrofitting existing residential and commercial buildings; (D) deployment in urban versus rural communities, (E) deployment in areas with existing gas service versus areas without, and (F) ownership and business models; and (5) appropriate parameters for broader deployment in the near and medium term, including: site selection, network design, interactions with and impacts on the gas and electricity distribution systems, ratepayer protections, billing models, consumer protections, data collection, community engagement, and deployment in low-and moderate-income communities and environmental justice communities, as defined in section 22a-20a of the general statutes.

Sec. 17. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) For the purposes of this section:

(1) "Renewable thermal energy network" means distribution infrastructure (A) established for the purpose of providing thermal energy for space heating and cooling, domestic hot water production, refrigeration, thermal energy storage or commercial and industrial processes requiring heating or cooling, and (B) effected through interconnections between one or more renewable thermal energy resources, which may be owned by multiple parties, and between these resources and heat pumps in multiple buildings owned by multiple parties; and

(2) "Renewable thermal energy" means (A) ambient heating or cooling provided, absorbed or stored by geothermal wells, boreholes or other noncombusting, non-fossil-fuel-consuming, nonnuclear thermal resources, or (B) thermal energy otherwise lost to the atmosphere or other environmental compartment as waste heat.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of title 16 of the general statutes, each gas company, as defined in section 16-1 of the general statutes, shall develop an incentive program for renewable thermal energy networks to be owned by municipalities, a municipal utility, as defined in section

12-265 of the general statutes, a municipal electric energy cooperative, as defined in section 7-233b of the general statutes, or an entity that has a contractual obligation to a municipality to construct, operate and maintain a renewable thermal network for the purpose of reducing natural gas and electric demand in the state. Such program shall provide an incentive payment to said entities to connect end use customers to the renewable thermal energy network. Such incentive payment shall be based on the projected natural gas and electric demand reduction of contractually obligated demand for a period of twenty years. The projected natural gas and electric demand reduction shall be based on the expected gas or electric demand that the renewable thermal loop is displacing.

(c) A gas company shall design its renewable thermal energy network program in the best interest of ratepayers of public service companies, as defined in section 16-1 of the general statutes, and submit its program design for review and approval by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority. For purposes of this section, a determination of the best interest of ratepayers shall be based on an analysis of the reasonableness of the size, scope, scale and character of the project and related budget and the costs and benefits of the project, including, but not limited to: (1) Avoided long-term energy and infrastructure investments in extending or maintaining gas infrastructure; (2) the anticipated contribution of such projects to alleviation of seasonal strains on the state's natural gas supply and electric distribution system; (3) consumer protections and benefits for end users of the project; (4) adherence to best practices emerging from thermal energy network programs and project designs developed in other states or elsewhere in the state; (5) potential for accrual of capital and operational cost savings via interconnection with other existing or future thermal energy networks; (6) improvements in air quality in the buildings and neighborhood served by the project; and (7) reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to contribute to achieving the emissions reductions set forth in section 22a-200a of the general statutes, as amended by this act.

(d) The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority shall consider the appropriate cost recovery methodology for incentives established pursuant to this section as part of the proceeding established pursuant to section 4 of this act.

(e) The owners of the renewable thermal energy network shall ensure transparency and validity of the outcomes of the networks developed pursuant to this section through submitting data to track the status and performance of said network, which data shall be submitted to the authority.

Sec. 18. Section 16a-3j of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) In order to secure cost-effective resources to provide more reliable electric or gas service for the benefit of the state's electric or gas ratepayers and to meet the state's energy and environmental goals and policies established in the Integrated Resources Plan, pursuant to section 16a-3a, and the Comprehensive Energy Strategy, pursuant to section 16a-3d, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, in consultation with the procurement manager identified in subsection (l) of section 16-2, the Office of Consumer Counsel and the Attorney General, may, in coordination with other states in the control area of the regional independent system operator, as defined in section 16-1, or on behalf of Connecticut alone, issue multiple solicitations for long-term contracts from providers of resources described in subsections (b), (c) and (d) of this section.

(b) In any solicitation for resources to reduce electric or gas demand and improve resiliency and electric or gas grid reliability in the state, issued pursuant to this subsection, the commissioner shall seek proposals for (1) active or passive demand response measures, including, but not limited to, energy efficiency, load management, and the state's conservation and load management programs, pursuant to section 16-245m; **[**, that are capable, either singly or through aggregation, of reducing electric demand by one megawatt or more;**]**

and (2) Class I renewable energy sources and Class III sources, as defined in section 16-1, provided any such project proposal is for a facility that has a nameplate capacity rating of more than two megawatts and less than twenty megawatts. The commissioner may also seek proposals for energy storage systems, as defined in section 16-1, that are capable of storing up to twenty megawatts of energy. Proposals pursuant to this subsection shall not have a contract term exceeding twenty years. Each electric distribution company and gas company, as defined in section 16-1, shall, in consultation with the Energy Conservation Management Board established pursuant to section 16-245m, assess whether the submission of a proposal for active and passive demand response measures is feasible pursuant to any solicitation issued pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, provided such proposal only includes electric or gas demand reductions that are in addition to existing and projected demand reductions obtained through the conservation and load management programs.

(c) In any solicitation issued pursuant to this subsection, the commissioner shall seek proposals from (1) Class I renewable energy sources, as defined in section 16-1, having a nameplate capacity rating of twenty megawatts or more, and any associated transmission; and (2) verifiable large-scale hydropower, as defined in section 16-1, and any associated transmission. The commissioner may also seek proposals for energy storage systems, as defined in section 16-1, having a nameplate capacity rating of twenty megawatts or more. Proposals under this subsection shall not have a contract term exceeding twenty years. In soliciting Class I renewable energy sources, and any associated transmission, pursuant to this subsection, the commissioner may, for the purpose of balancing such Class I energy deliveries and improving the economic viability of such proposals, also seek proposals for electricity and capacity from Class II renewable energy sources, as defined in section 16-1, and existing hydropower resources other than those described under section 16-1, provided such resources are interconnected to such associated transmission and are located in the control area of the regional independent system operator or imported

into the control area of the regional independent system operator from resources located in an adjacent regional independent system operator's control area.

(d) In any solicitation for natural gas resources issued pursuant to this subsection, the commissioner shall seek proposals for (1) interstate natural gas transportation capacity, (2) liquefied natural gas, (3) liquefied natural gas storage, and (4) natural gas storage, or a combination of any such resources, provided such proposals provide incremental capacity, gas, or storage that has a firm delivery capability to transport natural gas to natural gas-fired generating facilities located in the control area of the regional independent system operator. Proposals under this subsection shall not have a contract term exceeding a period of twenty years.

(e) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, in consultation with the procurement manager identified in subsection (l) of section 16-2, the Office of Consumer Counsel and the Attorney General, shall evaluate project proposals received under any solicitation issued pursuant to subsection (b), (c) or (d) of this section, based on factors including, but not limited to, (1) improvements to the reliability of the electric system, including during winter peak demand; (2) whether the benefits of the proposal outweigh the costs to ratepayers; (3) fuel diversity; (4) the extent to which the proposal contributes to meeting the requirements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality in accordance with sections 16-245a, 22a-174 **[**,**]** and 22a-200a, as amended by this act; (5) whether the proposal is in the best interest of ratepayers; and (6) whether the proposal is aligned with the policy goals outlined in the Integrated Resources Plan, pursuant to section 16a-3a, and the Comprehensive Energy Strategy, pursuant to section 16a-3d, including, but not limited to, environmental impacts. In conducting such evaluation, the commissioner may also consider the extent to which project proposals provide economic benefits for the state. In evaluating project proposals received under any solicitation issued pursuant to subsection (b), (c) or (d) of this section, the

commissioner shall compare the costs and benefits of such proposals relative to the expected or actual costs and benefits of other resources eligible to respond to the other procurements authorized pursuant to this section.

(f) The commissioner may hire consultants with expertise in quantitative modeling of electric and gas markets, and physical gas and electric system modeling, as applicable, to assist in implementing this section, including, but not limited to, the evaluation of proposals submitted pursuant to this section. All reasonable costs, not exceeding one million five hundred thousand dollars, associated with the commissioner's solicitation and review of proposals pursuant to this section shall be recoverable through the nonbypassable federally mandated congestion charge, as defined in subsection (a) of section 16-1. Such costs shall be recoverable even if the commissioner does not select any proposals pursuant to solicitations issued pursuant to this section.

(g) If the commissioner finds proposals received pursuant to this section to be in the best interest of **[**electric**]** ratepayers, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (e) of this section, the commissioner may select any such proposal or proposals, provided the total capacity of the resources selected under all solicitations issued pursuant to this section in the aggregate do not exceed three hundred seventy-five million cubic feet per day of natural gas capacity, or the equivalent megawatts of electricity, electric demand reduction or combination thereof. Any proposals selected pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of this section shall not, in the aggregate, exceed ten per cent of the load distributed by the state's electric distribution companies or ten per cent of the load distributed by the state's gas companies. The commissioner may, on behalf of all customers of electric distribution companies, direct the electric distribution companies to enter into long-term contracts for active or passive demand response measures that result in electric savings, electricity time-of-use shifts, electricity, electric capacity, environmental attributes, energy storage, interstate natural gas

transportation capacity, liquefied natural gas, liquefied natural gas storage, and natural gas storage, or any combination thereof, from proposals submitted pursuant to this section, provided the benefits of such contracts to customers of electric distribution companies outweigh the costs to such companies' customers. The commissioner may, on behalf of all customers of gas companies, direct the gas companies to enter into long-term contracts for active or passive demand response measures that result in gas savings or time-of-use shifts from proposals submitted pursuant to this section, provided the benefits of such contracts to customers of gas companies outweigh the costs to such companies' customers.

(h) Any agreement entered into pursuant to this section shall be subject to review and approval by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority. The electric distribution company or gas company shall file an application for the approval of any such agreement with the authority. The authority shall approve such agreement if it is cost effective and in the best interest of electric or gas ratepayers. The authority shall issue a decision not later than ninety days after such filing. If the authority does not issue a decision within ninety days after such filing, the agreement shall be deemed approved. Where an electric distribution company or gas company both apply for recovery of net costs of the same such agreement, the authority shall determine which net costs are attributable to each company. The net costs of any such agreement, including costs incurred by the electric distribution company or gas company under the agreement and reasonable costs incurred by the electric distribution company or gas company in connection with the agreement, shall be recovered on a timely basis through a fully reconciling component of electric rates or gas rates for all customers of the electric distribution company or gas company. Any net revenues from the sale of products purchased in accordance with long-term contracts entered into pursuant to this section shall be credited to customers through the same fully reconciling rate component for all customers of the contracting electric distribution company or gas company. For any contract for interstate natural gas

transportation capacity, liquefied natural gas, liquefied natural gas storage or natural gas storage entered into pursuant to this section, the electric distribution company may contract with a gas supply manager to sell such interstate natural gas transportation capacity, liquefied natural gas, liquefied natural gas storage or natural gas storage, or a combination thereof, into the wholesale markets at the best available price in a manner that meets all applicable requirements pursuant to all applicable regulations of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

(i) Certificates issued by the New England Power Pool Generation Information System for any Class I renewable energy source or Class III source procured by an electric distribution company pursuant to this section may be: (1) Sold into the New England Power Pool Generation Information System renewable energy credit market to be used by any electric supplier or electric distribution company to meet the requirements of section 16-245a, so long as the revenues from such sale are credited to electric distribution company customers as described in this subsection; or (2) retained by the electric distribution company to meet the requirements of section 16-245a. In considering whether to sell or retain such certificates the company shall select the option that is in the best interest of such company's ratepayers.

Sec. 19. Subsections (a) to (e), inclusive, of section 8-240a of the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) As used in this section, **[**:

(1) "Alliance district" has the same meaning as provided in section 10-262u;

(2) "Environmental justice community" has the same meaning as provided in section 22a-20a; and

(3) "Low-income resident"**]** <u>"low-income resident"</u> means, after adjustments for family size, individuals or families whose income is not

greater than **[**(A)**]** (1) sixty per cent of the state median income, **[**(B)**]** (2) eighty per cent of the area median income for the area in which the resident resides, as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, or **[**(C)**]** (3) any other definition of "low-income resident" included in any program in the state that utilizes federal funding, as determined by the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection.

(b) There is established a revolving loan and grant fund to be known as the "Housing Environmental Improvement Revolving Loan and Grant Fund". The fund may be funded from the proceeds of bonds issued pursuant to section 8-240b or from any moneys available to the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection or from other sources. Investment earnings credited to the fund shall become part of the assets of the fund. Any balance remaining in the fund at the end of any fiscal year shall be carried forward in the fund for the next fiscal year. Payments of principal or interest on a low interest loan made pursuant to this section shall be paid to the State Treasurer for deposit in the Housing Environmental Improvement Revolving Loan and Grant Fund. The fund shall be used to make grants or low interest loans pursuant to this section to pay reasonable and necessary fees incurred in administering loans under this section. The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection may enter into contracts with quasi-public agencies, **[**or**]** nonprofit corporations, or electric distribution or gas companies, as such terms are defined in section 16-1, to provide for the administration of the Housing Environmental Improvement Revolving Loan and Grant Fund by such entity or entities, provided no grant or low interest loan shall be made from the fund without the authorization of the commissioner as provided in this section.

(c) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, in collaboration with the Commissioner of Housing, shall establish a pilot program or programs to provide financing or grants from the fund established in subsection (b) of this section for retrofitting projects for single and multifamily residences located in environmental justice

communities or alliance districts that (1) improve the energy efficiency of such residences, which may include, but need not be limited to, the installation of heat pumps, solar power generating systems, improved roofing, exterior doors and windows, improved insulation, air sealing, improved ventilation, appliance upgrades and any electric system or wiring upgrades necessary for such retrofit, (2) remediate health and safety concerns that are barriers to any such retrofit, including, but not limited to, mold, vermiculite, asbestos, lead and radon, **[**or**]** (3) add resilience measures to such residences, which may include, but need not be limited to, flood mitigation, (4) provide services to assist residents and building owners to access and implement the programs established pursuant to this section or other available state or federal programs that enable the implementation of energy efficiency retrofitting, or (5) replace heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment to residences impacted by extreme weather events.

(d) On and after July 1, 2025, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, or any program administrator the commissioner may designate, shall accept applications, in a form specified by the commissioner, from any owner of a residential dwelling unit for financing or a grant under the program or programs. Any such financing or grant may be awarded to an owner of a residential dwelling unit, as defined in section 47a-1.

(e) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall **[**prioritize**]** limit the awarding of financing or grants **[**for**]** to projects that benefit any resident or prospective resident who is a low-income resident.

Sec. 20. Section 7-131d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) There is established the protected open space and watershed land acquisition grant program. The program shall provide grants to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire land or permanent interests in land for open space and watershed

protection and to water companies, as defined in section 25-32a, to acquire and protect land which is eligible to be classified as class I or class II land, as defined in section 25-37c, after acquisition. All lands or interests in land acquired under this program shall be preserved in perpetuity predominantly in their natural scenic and open condition for the protection of natural resources while allowing for recreation consistent with such protection and, for lands acquired by water companies, allowing for the improvements necessary for the protection or provision of potable water.

(b) Grants may be made under the protected open space and watershed land acquisition grant program established under subsection (a) of this section or under the Charter Oak open space grant program established under section 7-131t to match funds for the purchase of land or permanent interests in land which purchase meets one of the following criteria: (1) Protects land identified as being especially valuable for recreation, forestry, fishing, conservation of wildlife or natural resources; (2) protects land which includes or contributes to a prime natural feature of the state's landscape, including, but not limited to, a shoreline, a river, its tributaries and watershed, an aquifer, mountainous territory, ridgelines, an inland or coastal wetland, a significant littoral or estuarine or aquatic site or other important geological feature; (3) protects habitat for native plant or animal species listed as threatened or endangered or of special concern, as defined in section 26-304; (4) protects a relatively undisturbed outstanding example of a native ecological community which is now uncommon; (5) enhances and conserves water quality of the state's lakes, rivers and coastal water; (6) preserves local agricultural heritage; or (7) in the case of grants to water companies, protects land which is eligible to be classified as class I land or class II land after acquisition.

(c) Grants may be made under the protected open space and watershed land acquisition grant program established under subsection (a) of this section for restoration or protection of natural features or habitats on open space already owned by a (1) distressed municipality,

as defined in section 32-9p, (2) targeted investment community, as defined in section 32-222, (3) municipality, provided such open space is located in an environmental justice community, as defined in section 22a-20a, or (4) nonprofit land conservation organization, provided such open space is located in a distressed municipality, targeted investment community or environmental justice community. Such restoration or protection may include, but need not be limited to, wetland, wildlife or plant habitat restoration or restoration of other sites to a more natural condition or replacement of vegetation. Such grants may also fund the development of urban agricultural sites on such open space for nonprofit or commercial use. The total amount of grants made pursuant to this subsection shall not exceed twenty per cent of the total amount of grants made pursuant to the open space and watershed land acquisition grant program in any fiscal year.

(d) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, no grant may be made under the protected open space and watershed land acquisition grant program established under subsection (a) of this section or under the Charter Oak open space grant program established under section 7-131t for: (A) Land to be used for commercial purposes or for recreational purposes requiring intensive development, including, but not limited to, golf courses, driving ranges, tennis courts, ballfields, swimming pools and uses by motorized vehicles other than vehicles needed by water companies to carry out their purposes, provided trails or pathways for pedestrians, motorized wheelchairs or nonmotorized vehicles shall not be considered intensive development; (B) land with environmental contamination over a significant portion of the property provided grants for land requiring remediation of environmental contamination may be made if remediation will be completed before acquisition of the land or any interest in the land and an environmental assessment approved by the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection has been completed and no environmental use restriction applies to the land; (C) land which has already been committed for public use, except as provided in subsection (c) of section 7-131g; (D) development costs, including, but not limited

to, construction of ballfields, tennis courts, parking lots or roadways; (E) land to be acquired by eminent domain; or (F) reimbursement of in-kind services or incidental expenses associated with the acquisition of land. This subsection shall not prohibit the continuation of agricultural activity, the activities of a water company for public water supply purposes or the selling of timber incidental to management of the land which management is in accordance with approved forest management practices provided any proceeds of such timber sales shall be used for management of the land. In the case of land acquired under this section which is designated as a state park, any fees charged by the state for use of such land shall be used by the state in accordance with the provisions of title 23.

(2) Grants in a total amount not exceeding five per cent of the total amount of grants made pursuant to the open space and watershed land acquisition grant program in any fiscal year may be made to distressed municipalities, as defined in section 32-9p, targeted investment communities, as defined in section 32-222, nonprofit land conservation organizations and municipalities, for the purpose of reimbursement for in-kind services or incidental expenses associated with the acquisition of land, including, but not limited to, survey fees, appraisal costs and legal fees, provided such land is located in a distressed municipality, targeted investment community or environmental justice community, as defined in section 22a-20a.

(e) Any municipality or group of contiguous municipalities may apply to the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection for a grant-in-aid of a program established to preserve or restrict to conservation or recreation purposes the use of open space land. Such grant shall be used for the acquisition of land, or easements, interests or rights therein, or for the development of such land, or easements, interests or rights therein, for purposes set forth in this section, or both, in accordance with a plan of development adopted by the municipal planning commission of the municipality within which the land is located. Any application for a grant-in-aid relating to land located

beyond the territorial limits of the applying municipality shall be subject to approval of the legislative body of the municipality within whose territorial limits the land is located. A municipality applying for aid under this section, may designate its conservation commission as its agent to make such application.

(f) At closing, a permanent conservation easement, as defined in section 47-42, shall be executed for any property purchased with grant funds, which conservation easement shall provide that the property shall remain forever predominantly in its natural and open condition for the specific conservation, open space or water supply purposes for which it was acquired provided any improvements or changes to the property shall be supportive of such condition or purposes. The permanent conservation easement shall be in favor of the state acting through the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, or his designee, which may be a municipality or a land conservation organization. In the case of land acquired for water supply protection, a water company may hold an easement in conjunction with the state or a nonprofit entity to protect the water supply. Such permanent conservation easement shall also include a requirement that the property be made available to the general public for appropriate recreational purposes, the maintenance of which recreational access shall be the responsibility of the grantee provided such access shall not be required for land which will be classified as class I or class II land by a water company if such access is inconsistent with the provision of pure drinking water to the public. An exception to the provision of public recreational access may be made at the discretion of the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection when provision for public access would be unreasonably detrimental to the wildlife or plant habitat or other natural features of the property or, for land where development rights have been purchased, would be disruptive of agricultural activity occurring on the land. Any instrument conveying an interest in land less than fee which interest is purchased under this section shall provide for the permanent preservation of the land and public access consistent with the land's use or protection and with any

restrictions prescribed by the Department of Public Health in order to protect a public drinking water source.

(g) (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, not more than ten per cent of the funds authorized for the open space and watershed land acquisition program may be allocated by the commissioner for the purpose of mitigating wildfire risks on properties acquired or protected through the program, including properties already protected by the program, through the management of vegetative fuel loads.

(2) Not later than January 15, 2026, the commissioner shall establish criteria and guidelines for the allocation and use of funds under this subsection, ensuring that such funds are used efficiently and in alignment with the program's overarching goals of protecting open space and natural resources while reducing wildfire risk.

Sec. 21. (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall conduct a study on renter utilization of state energy efficiency and clean energy programs for which such department can obtain data, including, but not limited to, any barriers for renters to access such programs and any attendant recommendations for addressing any such barriers. Not later than July 1, 2026, the department shall submit a report to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment and energy and technology, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, that contains any such recommendations.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 2	*from passage*	22a-200a
Sec. 3	*from passage*	22a-200b
Sec. 4	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 5	*July 1, 2025*	32-7t(c)(3)

Sec. 6	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 7	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 8	*from passage*	31-3rr
Sec. 9	*July 1, 2025*	10-283(b)
Sec. 10	*October 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 11	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 12	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 13	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 14	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 15	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 16	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 17	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 18	*from passage*	16a-3j
Sec. 19	*from passage*	8-240a(a) to (e)
Sec. 20	*from passage*	7-131d
Sec. 21	*from passage*	New section