CITY OF NEW BRITAIN

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THE HONORABLE ERIN E. STEWART

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Testimony for Public Hearing

The Energy and Technology Committee
March 6, 2025

Erin E. Stewart
Mayor, City of New Britain
27 West Main Street, New Britain, CT 06051

RE: S.B. No. 647, *AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTIONS FOR CONSUMER ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE ELECTRICITY.*

Senator Needleman, Representative Steinberg, Senator Fazio, Representative Marra, Senator Maroney, Representative Sanchez, and distinguished members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

I am writing today in full support of S.B. 647 and the positive impact this legislation would have on the City of New Britain, the surrounding communities, and across our state. To say that the current state of Connecticut's energy costs are sky-high would be a massive understatement. With our State now having the highest electricity rates in the contiguous United States, I think we can all agree that serious substantive changes are needed to get our energy market to a place where we can even think about calling it "affordable." I can't tell you how many times over the past year I've been told by both residents and business owners, not only from New Britain, but from across Connecticut, that they are struggling to keep the lights on, heat their homes, and make ends meet.

S.B. 647 would be a clear step in the right direction to make energy more affordable in our State. Eliminating the Public Benefits Charge from our electric bills could bring down costs to Connecticut households by up to 20% or more in many cases. Axing this bureaucratic tax that circumvented the legislature should be a top priority. If the members of the General Assembly wish to maintain the services funded by this hidden tax, they should take the time to integrate it into their budget. They shouldn't force Connecticut families to struggle to make ends meet while budgeting for the month.

Incorporating all forms of nuclear power and hydropower into the definition of Class I renewable energy sources and increasing the supply of natural gas, as highlighted by this bill, is a common-sense step to diversifying our energy supply and expanding our options so we can provide state residents with utilities that are safe, reliable, and affordable. Eliminating unnecessary programs that incentivize and by extension, artificially inflate the demand for electricity and capping the price of all long-term energy purchases by the State going forward, as outlined in this bill, is a great way to prevent wasteful spending and ensure that we have a government that works for working people.

Additionally, I am in full support of separating PURA from DEEP and the influence of the Governor's Office. PURA and the Governor's Energy Czar have dramatically failed the people of Connecticut. If this legislature wants to demonstrate a commitment to addressing issues related to PURA, it should be separated immediately from DEEP and any additional outside influences that have an effect on its independent decision making. PURA should be focused on maintaining a neutral regulatory role, not building public policy. PURA's refusal to lower rates and prioritize the financial well-being of state residents highlights the need to reassess our statewide goals and implement meaningful policy changes. A truly independent PURA, as its own state agency, should also be cost neutral to the taxpayers of this state.

It's clear that we can, and that we must, do better when it comes to finding effective solutions for the energy crisis we are facing. To address this issue, we need a strong and comprehensive approach to restore affordability in our state. For these reasons and more, I fully support S.B. 647.

If you have any questions, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my office.

Sincerely,

Erin E. Stewart
Mayor