



**For the Environment Committee
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director
February 20, 2026**

Rivers Alliance was formed to fight for sound water policies at the state and federal levels, to provide education on water resources, and to advocate for any person or group striving to protect water. If you want clean, free-flowing and healthy rivers, and high-quality drinking water, Rivers Alliance is here to help.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the following raised bill before you today.

HB 5156 AA CONCERNING A CLIMATE CHANGE SUPERFUND – Supports

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut supports this legislation because our rivers, drinking water systems, wastewater infrastructure, and state budget are already absorbing the escalating costs of climate change and these costs are accelerating.

On August 18th, 2024, catastrophic flooding in the Naugatuck Valley devastated communities along the Naugatuck River watershed. Roads and bridges were destroyed. Homes and businesses were inundated. Families were displaced. Lives were lost.

Federal assistance totaled more than \$6 million, and homeowner insurance claims exceeded \$2.5 million. Not to mention uninsured losses, municipal response costs, infrastructure damage, or long-term economic disruption.

These are real and recurring costs.

Exacerbating the Infrastructure Crisis

From a water systems perspective, climate change is placing extraordinary pressure on:

- Drinking water treatment plants
- Wastewater treatment facilities
- Pump stations and interceptors
- Stormwater systems
- Dams and flood control structures

Many of these facilities were built decades ago and were never designed for today's rainfall intensity or sea level conditions.

Inland flooding damages pumps, electrical systems, and treatment processes. Heavy rain overwhelms wastewater systems, leading to sewer overflows and water quality degradation.

Along the coast, saltwater intrusion and sea level rise threaten both drinking water supplies and wastewater facilities. Utilities are already evaluating whether facilities must be elevated, floodproofed, or even relocated due to storm inundation and chronic tidal flooding.

Those costs are enormous.

At the same time, utilities are already struggling to finance replacement of aging pipes and treatment systems and removal of emerging contaminants such as PFAS. Existing state and federal funding programs are not sufficient to meet current infrastructure needs, let alone cover the added costs of damage and adaptation we are already experiencing. Water and sewer customers cannot bear unlimited rate increases. Ratepayers should not be the sole backstop for climate impacts they did not create.

The Fiscal Reality

Under the current federal administration, the reliability of FEMA and other disaster assistance programs is uncertain. Even when available, federal funding is reactive, not preventative.

House Bill No. 5156 recognizes a basic principle of fairness: entities that contributed most significantly to climate pollution should help pay for the infrastructure damage, adaptation, and mitigation costs that result.

A Climate Change Superfund operates as an Extended Producer Responsibility framework. Rather than shifting escalating costs to municipalities and ratepayers, this bill creates a mechanism for fossil fuel companies to contribute to:

- Flood resilience projects
- Drinking water protection and wastewater facility upgrades
- Nature-based flood mitigation
- Community adaptation strategies

Investing in Nature-Based Solutions

Rivers Alliance strongly supports the bill's emphasis on nature-based solutions.

Restored floodplains, wetlands, and riparian buffers reduce flood intensity before water reaches treatment plants or built infrastructure. Green stormwater systems reduce stress on aging pipes. Healthy watersheds protect drinking water quality and reduce treatment costs.

Nature-based investments are often more cost-effective than engineered solutions alone. They provide co-benefits for water quality, habitat, and community resilience.

Conclusion

Connecticut's water infrastructure is already under financial strain. Climate change is multiplying those costs.

Without new, equitable funding mechanisms, the burden will continue to fall on taxpayers and ratepayers.

House Bill No. 5156 offers a proactive approach to ensuring that those most responsible for climate pollution contribute to the mounting costs of protecting our rivers, drinking water systems, wastewater facilities, and communities.

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut respectfully urges passage of this bill.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to protecting Connecticut's waters and infrastructure.