



Testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 5619**
AN ACT CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF CLIMATE CHANGE
INSTRUCTION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

03.01.21

To: Honorable Co-Chairs Sen. McCrory and Rep. Sanchez and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee

From: Alex Rodriguez, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

On behalf of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT of HB 5619 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Climate Change Instruction in the Public School Curriculum.**

In 2018, Connecticut passed Public Act 18-181, requiring the State Board of Education to encourage schools to include climate change in the Next Gen Science Standards (NGSS) curriculum. Unfortunately, many Connecticut schools still fail to teach their students about the climate crisis or its impacts. In order to equip our students with the tools and information they need to tackle the looming climate change catastrophe, we need to mandate action-oriented and creatively focused climate change education in all schools.

Climate change will be the biggest problem to face youth and families in our known history. The impacts of climate change are already resulting in floods, storms, loss of resources and the growing cost of access to energy. The health implications on low income communities, children, and vulnerable populations are terrifying. Lack of access to affordable clean water, food, and shelter from extreme elements will hit our low income and at-risk communities the hardest.

We urge you to take action to **ensure all Connecticut youth have equal access to climate change and energy education.** This simple step is crucial to ensure all youth and families are informed about the impacts of burning fossil fuels for energy, and the implications of climate change on our daily lives, as well as introducing ways to lower energy waste, and energy costs.

We must do our part to ensure our next generation is armed with the skills and data to make wise choices. To develop a strong pipeline of skilled workers we must invest in our youth. Many low-income communities are going without access to information which could change

their futures and provide access to a growing clean energy career field.

If we wish to save our planet and preserve it for future generations, climate change must be dealt with head on. According to a survey by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, **only 58% of Americans believe climate change is caused by human activities.** Nearly 30% of Americans don't believe in climate change at all. This knowledge gap stands in sharp contrast to the broad scientific consensus. **Climate change education can help close this knowledge gap and equip future generations with the tools to solve complex climate issues.**

Some Connecticut towns are already demonstrating the impact climate change education has on young children. Hartford's Environmental Sciences Magnet School (ESM) at Mary M. Hooker works to ensure that all students attain high academic achievement through theme-based instruction in a safe, responsive learning community. While ESM is focused on the theme of environmental sciences, they also have a strong STEM program. In fact, they have developed a unique **e-STEAM** (environmental sciences, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) program that offers discrete and integrated experiences for students. There is an emphasis to interconnect these subjects to help students solve and communicate their understanding of local and global problems and concepts.

In addition, through the Reforest the Tropics (RTT) initiative, and after a series of classes on climate change, sixth grade students at Clark Lane Middle School in Waterford voted to plant trees in Costa Rica to offset their school's carbon dioxide emissions. Other groups of students in New London and Groton have voted to enact the same change. Overall, the RTT program has translated children's passion for environmental stewardship into 4,000 metric tons of carbon sequestration annually. **Thoughtful students like these will be front-line leaders in the fight against climate change, and we must prepare them adequately.**

Climate change education will equip future generations with the knowledge and skills they will need to tackle climate change and the associated impacts on humans and our environment. Taking this step is an investment in the future. **We urge you to mandate climate change education in Connecticut's curriculum and ensure equal access to the critical material.**

On behalf of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, I urge you to **VOTE YES on HB 5619** and support the required teaching of climate change in our schools. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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