



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

HB 5004 AAC The Protection of the Environment and the Development of Renewable Energy Sources and Associated Job Sectors

HB 6280 AAC The Establishment of a Climate Change Superfund

March 3, 2025

To: Honorable Co-Chairs Sen. Lopes and Rep. Parker, and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

From: Connor Yakaitis, Deputy Director, CT League of Conservation Voters

The provisions of HB 5004 offer a well thought out suite of opportunities to help residential customers, businesses, municipalities, and the state to better manage and reduce energy costs in an environmentally responsible manner.

CTLCV has long advocated that the cheapest energy is the energy we DON'T use. The energy efficiency and renewable energy measures contained in HB 5004 will not only lower electric bills, they will also lower energy demand. This will reduce our dependence on dirty sources of energy, such as oil and gas, and lower polluting emissions.

Sections 1-2: GHG targets for state agencies

We support Sections 1-2, which set updated emissions targets for Connecticut. Clear climate goals are essential for effective climate planning, policy development, and implementation. They help measure progress toward our sustainability objectives and inspire all stakeholders to take meaningful action. House Bill 5004 not only updates climate targets for Connecticut but also sets the ambitious and vital goal of achieving a net-zero carbon economy statewide by 2050.

Section 3: DEEP Regulations

CTLCV supports authorizing DEEP to promulgate regulations in accordance with its schedule of proposed regulations to meet the GHG targets.

Section 4: The Future of Gas

We support having PURA open a docket to review the planning and investments in our current gas system. This would provide transparency and consideration of how our state can best plan for a clean energy future. There is clearly more study needed to determine the path that would best align with our goals of clean, affordable, reliable energy.

Section 5: Centralized data dashboard

We support Section 5 and efforts to enhance transparency in Connecticut's progress toward decarbonization and the economic benefits of clean and renewable energy programs. The proposed data dashboard would provide ratepayers with valuable, objective information and analysis. It would also offer access to innovative programs and support to help individuals improve energy efficiency, save money, adopt renewable energy, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Section 6: Tax Rebates

We support amending the *Jobs CT tax rebate program* to allow the Commissioner of DEEP to prioritize applications that invest in environmentally sustainable practices, focus on zero-carbon and energy efficiency sectors, or promote sustainable farming practices. Encouraging businesses to adopt zero-carbon, energy-efficient, and environmentally sustainable practices is a crucial step in building broader support from key stakeholders for the actions needed to achieve our climate goals.

Section 7: Benefit Corporations

CTL CV supports recognizing businesses that engage in sustainable practices and further incentivizing businesses to continue these efforts.

Sections 8-9: Establishes a CT Clean Energy Council

CTL CV supports thoughtful and creative planning around climate mitigation and establishing this council is a solid first step. A clear strategy to transition workers from fossil-fuel-based jobs to clean economy roles is vital, not only to tackle technical challenges but also to navigate the political complexities of moving toward a clean energy future.

Section 10: Heat Pumps In Schools

We support providing reimbursements for schools who invest in heat pumps.

Heat pumps provide many benefits to increase energy efficiency, which we elaborate on Section 14.

Section 11-13: Appliance Standards:

The public would benefit greatly if the products they could buy were more energy efficient. The state is overdue to update both its energy and water efficiency standards for appliances. CTLCV encourages members of the Environment Committee to keep these sections intact as they are specifically designed to benefit consumers and would yield immediate savings of water and energy. This is the low hanging fruit.

Section 14: Heat pumps

Heat pumps are game changers for energy efficiency of both heating and cooling. Heat pump water heaters are an important step. Traditional water heaters eventually need to be replaced and so it is important that contractors have incentives to recommend switching to heat pump water heaters. DEEP should be directed to provide information to contractors about heat pumps, and to develop recommendations for contractor and consumer incentives as part of their heat pump deployment plan.

Section 15: Sustainable purchasing

We support directing OPM to develop policies for environmentally sustainable purchasing that municipalities may adopt.

Section 16: Energy Efficiency in State Buildings

The number and age of state-owned buildings in Connecticut are concerning because taxpayers are responsible for bearing the costs of utilities, taxes, and maintenance. With rising electric and water rates, it's crucial to make these buildings as efficient and clean as possible. Achieving this will require inter-agency coordination and best practices. We believe this section will support ongoing efforts to improve efficiency and reduce costs for state-owned buildings.

Section 17: Nature Based Solutions

CTLCV supports parts of Section 17, which empowers DEEP in its program evaluation and work on nature-based solutions. This initiative has the potential to significantly advance nature-based solutions in Connecticut. However, the bill could be improved by providing clearer guidance on how DEEP and other state agencies will translate this initiative into concrete actions.

Section 18: Solar canopies

Solar canopies are an important solution to the ongoing problem of siting solar projects that destroy viable farmland and intact forests. Canopies can be on buildings, over parking lots, and close to where the energy is consumed. There are a few examples of solar canopies in CT, but there is more that CT can do to incentivize these projects. This section will require PURA to develop a solar canopy strategic plan and program design. Solar canopies not only offer a renewable energy solution, they also address many of the concerns from farmers and land conservationists around prime farm and forest lands being destroyed for solar projects.

Section 19: DEEP report

CTL CV supports Section 19, which directs DEEP to submit a report to the legislature making recommendations that can 1) lower energy costs for residents, businesses, and municipalities, 2) increase community resilience to extreme weather events, 3) reduce GHG emissions.

Section 20: Networked geothermal

This section would help establish utility-scale Thermal Energy Networks. Networked geothermal is more efficient than individual heat pumps, so it has lower operating costs and reduces demand on the grid. This section of the bill mirrors many of the suggestions that were made at the Energy & Technology public hearing for HB 6929 and includes two pilot projects. It is critical that Connecticut take steps to expand geothermal as part of our transition to renewable energy in an efficient way that allows networked systems to advance.

Section 21: Municipal Energy Networks

This section would allow utility gas companies to incentivize renewable energy networks owned by municipalities, municipal utilities, and electric cooperatives. Financial incentives like rebates, grants, technical assistance, priority grid access, and streamlined permitting could boost local investment and control over clean energy infrastructure.

Section 22: Demand Response

CTL CV supports Section 22, which enables utilities to enter into long-term contracts for active and passive demand response measures. Demand response empowers consumers to reduce or shift electricity use in response to time-based rates or financial incentives. By leveraging demand response, utilities can avoid costly peak power purchases and new power plant

construction, lowering consumer costs. It also helps align electricity demand with the variable supply of renewables like solar and wind, supporting grid integration and advancing Connecticut's emission reduction targets.

Section 23: Resilience Funding

We support Section 23, which expands the Housing Improvement Revolving Loan and Grant Fund to include resilience measures, flood mitigation, and HVAC replacement for homes affected by extreme weather.

Section 24: Diverting OSWA funding

(OPPOSE) This section amends the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program to include the development of urban agricultural sites on open space for nonprofit or commercial use. It also limits the use of open space acquisition funds for the purpose of mitigating wildfire risks. **We oppose diverting grant funds from their intended purpose** of acquiring land for conservation as outlined in the authorizing statute.

Thank you for considering these suggestions to make HB 5004 even stronger in the effort to reduce both cost and greenhouse gas emissions of our energy needs.

In addition, **CTLCV supports HB 6280**, which would establish a climate superfund. Given the clear scientific evidence linking the climate crisis to high greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels, it is fair and just for companies that have profited for decades from these products to contribute to the costs of climate remediation, mitigation, and adaptation. T

These costs burden state and local governments, communities, and individuals, particularly in vulnerable communities that can least afford them. The damaging effects of climate change continue to impact the health, safety, and quality of life for Connecticut residents.

In the spirit of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), we strongly support HB 6280 to help pay for programs that will help address our climate crisis. Thank you for considering our comments.

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