



TESTIMONY IN **OPPOSITION** TO SB 647

**AAC Protections For Consumer Access to Affordable Electricity**

March 6, 2025

**To:** Honorable Co-Chairs Sen. Needleman and Rep. Steinberg, and Distinguished Members of the Energy & Technology Committee

**From:** Lori Brown, Executive Director and Connor Yakaitis, Deputy Director CT League of Conservation Voters

**CTLCV STRONGLY OPPOSES SB 647, a bill that, despite its title, would set Connecticut back in its transition to a clean energy economy and harm our state's efforts to address our climate crisis.**

SB 647 undermines our clean energy goals in several critical ways:

**Increases Dependence on Fossil Fuels:** SB 647 mandates a study on *expanding* natural gas capacity, including potentially importing more natural gas into the state. Natural gas, while marketed as a "bridge fuel," is predominantly methane—a potent greenhouse gas. Expanding natural gas infrastructure would **lock Connecticut into decades of fossil fuel dependency** and undermine the progress we've made in transitioning to renewable energy sources like wind, solar, geothermal and energy storage.

**Limits Renewable Energy Investments:** This bill eliminates funding for the Clean Energy Fund after July 1, 2025. This fund is a critical tool for investing in renewable energy projects and **energy efficiency initiatives**. Without it, Connecticut risks losing momentum in deploying clean energy technologies that create jobs, reduce emissions, and lower long-term energy costs.

**Prohibits Support for Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure:** This bill explicitly prevents the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) from establishing or incentivizing programs for electric vehicle charging stations. **This is a stark departure from the state's goals to reduce** greenhouse gas emissions and promote clean transportation. Transportation is the largest source of emissions in Connecticut, and investing in EV infrastructure is an essential component for providing **equitable access** to clean transportation.

**Jeopardizes the Public Benefits Charge (PBC):** There is significant **disinformation** surrounding the Public Benefits Charge and the Systems Benefits Charge. While some lawmakers frame these charges as burdensome costs to consumers, the reality is that **less than one cent per kilowatt-hour (kWh)** of utility bills goes to fund vital renewable energy and efficiency programs. More efficiency reduces demand on our electricity infrastructure, which brings down costs for everyone.

The 77% increase in the charge ratepayers are experiencing was not due to expanding green initiatives but rather to cover a \$605 million bailout for the Millstone Power Plant passed at the urging of Republican leadership. This increase in cost was on top of more energy needed to cool homes during one of the hottest summers on record last year. While our climate is getting hotter and the need for energy will increase, the Millstone repayment will end in May of this year.

Only 23% of the increase in the Public Benefits Charge helped families and businesses that struggled to pay their bills during COVID-19. This “help” was NOT free. These **customers are required to pay the money back** to the utility over time or they will lose their electricity. This program is a loan.

The Public Benefits Charge provides crucial **funding for energy efficiency** programs that help all residents, including low-income families, to reduce their energy costs and improve comfort and safety in their homes.

**[Programs funded through these charges have saved Connecticut towns and cities millions of dollars while dramatically reducing carbon emissions.](#)** We urge members of the committee to see how **much your town has benefitted from these programs** (Specific benefits start at Page 13)

As detailed in the report, examples include Bridgeport receiving \$3.1 million in incentives, leading to savings of over \$1.49 million annually and reducing over 2,682 tons of CO2 emissions. West Hartford, Windsor Locks, and other communities have seen similar benefits, demonstrating the profound impact of these programs.

**Removes Environmental Justice Protections:** SB 647 significantly weakens environmental justice provisions by limiting the scope of community benefit agreements. This move would **reduce critical investments in communities** disproportionately impacted by pollution and climate change, exacerbating existing health and environmental inequities.

**Prioritizes Short-Term Costs Over Long-Term Gains:** While ratepayer affordability is an important and timely concern, this bill takes a **shortsighted approach** by focusing on immediate costs rather than investing in the sustainable and resilient energy systems of the future. Clean energy and energy efficiency programs not only reduce costs over time but also insulate consumers from the volatility of fossil fuel markets.

**This legislation reflects a denial of the cost of doing nothing**  
The longer we wait to invest in clean energy and energy efficiency, the longer it will take to get the benefits of cleaner air, cheaper electricity, and a much more reliable grid. Meanwhile, storms, floods, fires, and damage to communities are increasing and costly.

Connecticut has made significant commitments to clean energy and climate action, and our state used to be a leader in the country. Now we are falling behind. There is a critical opportunity to take a giant step forward to support not only the ratepayers of Connecticut, but our fellow New England states.

**We ALL deserve a healthier environment.** We urge this committee to reject SB 647 and instead support policies that accelerate our transition to a clean, equitable, and sustainable energy future.

CTLCV's testimony to the Energy & Technology Committee outlining our support for the strong energy programs you are considering in SB 1352 is pasted below.

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1352  
**AN ACT PROMOTING ENERGY EFFICIENCY**  
February 27, 2025

**To:** Honorable Co-Chairs Sen. Needleman and Rep. Steinberg, and Distinguished Members of the Energy and Technology Committee

**From:** Lori Brown, Executive Director, CT League of Conservation Voters

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 1352 which includes multiple sections to advance energy efficiency and promote clean energy sources.

**CTLCV has long advocated that the cheapest energy is the energy we DON'T use.** These energy efficiency measures 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 1-4: 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 and we encourage members of the Energy Committee to keep these sections as they are specifically designed to benefit consumers.

Section 5: 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 6-7 : SB 1352 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 public hearing for HB 6929 and would include 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 9: Heat pumps are game changers for energy efficiency of both heating and cooling. **Heat pump water heaters** are the best next 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 and to develop recommendations for contractor and consumer incentives as part of their heat pump deployment plan.

Section 10: **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, but address many of the concerns from farmers and land conservationists around expanded solar.

The provisions of SB 1352 offer a well thought out suite of opportunities to help residential customers and businesses manage and reduce their energy costs in an environmentally responsible manner.

Thank you for considering these suggestions to make SB 1352 even stronger in the effort to reduce both cost and greenhouse gas emissions of our energy needs.