Testimony of RENEW Northeast before the
Energy and Technology Committee in support of

House Bill 5002

An Act Concerning the Development of a Green New Deal

February 21, 2019

Chairmen Needleman and Arconti, Ranking Members Formica and Ferraro, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee, my name is Francis Pullaro and I am here on behalf of RENEW Northeast (RENEW),\(^1\) its Executive Director, to testify in support of the concepts in House Bill 5002, *An Act Concerning the Development of a Green New Deal*, to create new programs for energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainability and resiliency. Low-cost energy resources eligible under the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) will enable Connecticut to meet greenhouse gas reduction requirements under its Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) while providing local economic development benefits and increasing power system reliability by lessening our heavy dependence on natural gas fueled electric power generation.

I. A Pro-Renewables Strategy Is a Ready-Made, Cost-Effective Approach to Meeting Connecticut’s Environmental and Economic Development Goals

Renewable energy projects are providing Connecticut with positive economic benefits to host communities including much needed new tax revenue. The stream of projects supports local construction and service jobs during development and new opportunities in operations and maintenance once projects are supplying clean energy.

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\(^1\) The comments expressed herein represent the views of RENEW and not necessarily those of any particular member of RENEW. RENEW is a non-profit association uniting the renewable energy industry and environmental advocates whose mission involves coordinating the ideas and resources of its members with the goal of increasing environmentally sustainable energy generation in the Northeast from the region’s abundant, indigenous renewable resources. RENEW has focused on highlighting the value of grid-scale resources—specifically offshore and onshore wind and small hydropower—and the benefits of transmission investment to deliver renewable energy to load centers in the Northeast. RENEW members own and/or are developing large-scale wind and hydropower facilities in Connecticut and across the Northeast. Others are independent transmission developers with proposals for transmission facilities to connect clean energy resources from around the region to Southern New England.
Today’s level of installed renewable energy pales in comparison to the region’s wind and solar potential. Recent competitive solicitations reveal wind and solar developers are providing renewable energy at prices at parity with new natural gas power plants.

![Total Cost for New Generation](chart.png)

* Assumes wind and solar qualify for limited exemption being phased-out to earn capacity revenue; otherwise renewables prohibited from earning capacity revenue

Abundant offshore wind can connect to southeastern Connecticut and provide opportunities for the state to be involved in the construction, maritime and service sector activities related to the construction of offshore wind generation and transmission facilities. The states that go first in establishing this new growth industry will likely capture the largest amount of this market share.

Competitive clean energy procurements complement Connecticut’s RPS requirements by lowering cost and improving the chances of projects receiving financing. The greater revenue certainty of contracts from reduced investor exposure to commodity market price risk increases the chances of projects getting financing and at a lower rate. Lower financing costs and the competitive nature of the law’s procurement lowers consumer costs.
Connecticut’s existing programs for energy efficiency and its renewable energy requirement are projected to reduce natural gas consumption from the electric generation sector and render any pipeline capacity expansion uneconomic. Emerging technologies like battery storage are also likely further to moderate peak demand and serve as a cleaner alternative to natural gas to balance variable output renewable resources. Massachusetts is even developing a Clean Peak Energy Standard requiring retail electricity providers to purchase attributes from energy storage resources paired with renewables for electricity they will produce at peak times. This approach could serve as a model for a storage program in this bill. By adding more renewable resource and energy storage, a build-out of the natural gas pipeline system will simply result in billions of dollars in costs to consumers for unnecessary pipeline capacity.\(^3\)

RENEW supports the Governor's Council on Climate Change December 2018 recommendation that “DEEP should exercise its full discretionary procurement authority for grid-scale renewable and zero-carbon energy. Continued investment in diverse, zero-carbon, renewable energy technologies will be necessary for Connecticut to meet its GHG emissions reduction goals.” RENEW recommends DEEP’s existing procurement authority for renewable resources be raised to ensure that at least 2000 megawatts of offshore wind in addition to land-based wind and solar can be procured over the next decade. RENEW thanks Governor Lamont for recently filing offshore wind legislation that calls for up to fifteen percent of Connecticut’s load to be met with offshore wind.

II. Solar Siting Law Could Increase Cost to Connecticut to Meet Higher RPS Requirements

If Connecticut is going to meet increased RPS requirements using a significant component of the lowest priced form of renewable energy development in the state- utility-scale solar- the siting laws must be better aligned to facilitate utility-scale solar development. RENEW believes that the measures for the siting of utility-scale solar energy projects on farmland in Public Act 17-218 are harming ratepayers by making it significantly harder to deploy utility-scale solar. It will also discourage the use of utility-scale solar projects on farmland as an alternative revenue stream for farmers or on lands no longer economically viable for farming.

The power given to the Department of Agriculture (DOA) in Public Act 17-218 singles out utility-scale solar development and allows DOA to impose a permitting process on utility-scale solar intended for large fossil fueled power plants. DOA effectively can “veto” any solar project- even non-farmland ones- and require it face the “certificate” process designed for large fossil-fueled power plants. To achieve Connecticut’s environmental, renewable and economic development goals, a solar energy project should not face a riskier and costlier permitting process compared to a project to be fueled by natural gas or oil, or a permanent housing or commercial development. The added costs and risks will


\(^3\) Id at iv.
needlessly increase Connecticut’s electric rates; jeopardize stable and predictable increases in municipal tax revenue; weaken alternative revenue streams and property rights for farmers; and hinder the state’s ability to meet renewable energy goals.

It could ultimately cause renewable energy developers to look outside of Connecticut to states not subjecting large-solar projects to these risks. According to the Solar Foundation’s most recent jobs census, one out of every fifty new jobs added in the United States in 2016 was created by the solar industry.⁴ A January 2017 report by U.S. Department of Energy found that solar makes up the largest segment of Connecticut’s electric power generation workforce, with 2,927 jobs.⁵

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

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