

TO: The Environment Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
FROM: Krishna Winston, 655 Bow Lane, Middletown
DATE: March 7, 2021
RE: Support for SB 884, HB 6441, and HB 655

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on the above bills, which are about to come before you. As longtime chair of the Middletown Resource Recycling Advisory Commission and a member of the working group that wrote and advocated successfully for the Middletown Common Council to declare a climate emergency, I urge you to act favorably on all three.

Rather than reciting statistical information that is readily available to you, I will simply offer some thoughts that may help you view these bills in the context of citizens' everyday lives.

SB 884: An Act Concerning Reducing Transportation-Related Carbon Emissions

Using a cap on emissions from gasoline and diesel fuel, this legislation will provide much-needed revenue that will allow the state to modernize its transportation system, providing better transportation options to residents while reducing the emissions that harm their health and contribute to climate change. Replacing individual automobiles with convenient rail, trolley, and no-emission bus transportation will enable more people to get to work without the expense of owning, maintaining, and insuring cars. Rail beds use up far less land than highways and are easier and less costly to build and maintain. Many railroad rights-of-way still exist in Connecticut, waiting to be put back to use. Moving passengers and freight by rail is fast and efficient. Powering school buses with electricity will protect the lungs of our children when they are most vulnerable.

HB 6441: An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation

By allowing municipalities to charge a modest conveyance fee to purchasers of real property, the State will enable communities to gain funding to support a wide range of activities beneficial to the environment. Middletown has been a leader in purchasing open space, thereby preserving valuable agricultural land, recreational areas, woodlands, and bodies of water that help stabilize the climate and maintain crucial ecosystems. But the town lacks the funds for proper stewardship of this open space. That is just one example of a use to which a conveyance tax could be put. Middletown residents have been undertaking volunteer activities to curb the spread of invasive species on land and in water. With funding from a conveyance tax, they could expand their efforts and make a much greater dent in the proliferation of plants that compete unfairly with native vegetation and harm animal life. This funding mechanism would not burden the State's

budget. It would make everyone who purchases real property a stakeholder in protecting the local environment.

HB 655: An Act Concerning Environmental Air Quality

By including members of low-income and other marginalized communities in identifying sources of greenhouse-gas and other health-damaging emissions and working to eliminate those sources, this bill supports the State's efforts to achieve equitable living conditions for all its residents. Fossil-fuel-driven power plants, highways, factories, sewage-treatment plants, and now data centers pose an undue burden on the health and well-being of our most vulnerable residents. Recognizing and eliminating these sources of inferior air quality will benefit all residents, but especially those who currently suffer the worst consequences of exposure to polluted air. Living a mile and a half from the center of Middletown on a fairly rural road, I still have to contend with soot and greasy grime on my windowsills every time I do a thorough house-cleaning. Conditions are much worse downtown, where multiple highways converge and multiple other sources emit particulates and gases into the air, not to mention the pollution blowing into our river valley from elsewhere in the state and the country.

Thank you for your attention, and I hope for your support for these pieces of legislation!