



**Testimony to the CGA Environment Committee
By Louis Rosado Burch
Citizens Campaign for the Environment**

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Hartford, CT**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today. My name is Louis Rosado Burch, Connecticut Program Director for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Supported by over 120,000 members in Connecticut and New York, CCE advocates for policy solutions that protect public health and the natural environment. CCE appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in support of S.B. 884 and H.B. 6551.

It is well documented that fossil fuel combustion, particularly from the transportation sector, is a major contributor to the climate crisis we see unfolding around the globe. The impacts of this crisis are evident in Connecticut –including rising sea levels contributing to coastal flooding in our shoreline communities, longer periods of intermittent drought, and more frequent, more extreme storms that impact our state in a variety of ways.

Harmful air emissions generated by combusting fossil fuels can contribute to severe health conditions such as heart disease, asthma and other respiratory illnesses.¹ These health impacts disproportionately affect our cities, which suffer from some of the worst air quality in the eastern U.S. According to the American Lung Association, every county in Connecticut earned failing grades for ozone pollution from 2016-2018.² Additionally, Connecticut municipalities are included in 3 major metropolitan areas examined in the report (Boston, New York City, and Hartford), all of which ranked among the most polluted cities list for ozone pollution.

The effects of climate change are complex and widespread, affecting everything from our economy, to our public health, and beyond. Decisive, transformative action is needed from policymakers *and* industry, to stem the tide and move our transportation system into the 21st century. We commend the committee’s efforts to identify solutions that move Connecticut beyond fossil fuels, and encourage you to advance policies that protect public health, modernize our transportation system and promote resiliency in our communities, as soon as possible.

¹ <https://www.law.nyu.edu/centers/state-impact/press-publications/research/climate-and-health/health-effects-of-burning-fossil-fuels>

² <https://www.stateoftheair.org/>

S.B. 884: AN ACT REDUCING TRANSPORTATION-RELATED CARBON EMISSIONS (SUPPORT, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS)

Connecticut has some of the highest ozone pollution levels in our region, especially along high-traffic transportation corridors.³ According to the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), the transportation sector is the leading source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Connecticut (roughly 38%), with CO₂ emissions from burning gasoline and diesel fuel accounting for roughly 92% of those emissions.⁴

The Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) is a regional collaboration with Connecticut and 11 other Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states and the District of Columbia that seeks to improve region's transportation system, create jobs, and invest in disadvantaged communities, while significantly reducing carbon emissions from the transportation sector. It offers our state a unique opportunity to modernize transportation infrastructure, especially in underserved communities, while improving air quality and protecting public health. Additionally, TCI would help achieve significant progress in meeting our Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) goals, while helping to drive a strong and cohesive regional response to climate change.

S.B. 884 establishes a cap on carbon emissions from polluting transportation fuels that declines over time. Using a similar framework to that of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), TCI creates a regional framework and establishes a cap on carbon emissions that declines over time, while allowing fuel providers to purchase allowances for fossil fuel consumption. This is a proven, effective way to ensure emissions reductions, while simultaneously generating revenue that can be invested in programs that further reduce emissions throughout the transportation sector and provide other local transportation solutions that benefit CT residents. These include expanding EV charging infrastructure, expanding access to mass transit, supporting the state's transition to clean electric vehicles and buses, and several others.

While Connecticut must take steps to modernize our transit system and improve air quality in our cities, we must do so in a way that is equitable and puts community voices affected by pollution and poor public transportation options at the center of the decision-making process. People in low income and disadvantaged communities are disproportionately affected by the health impacts of air pollution, as well as a lack of public transit options. It is therefore imperative that environmental justice and other underserved communities are given meaningful representation throughout this process to help ensure that investments are equitable and helping those that need it most. Therefore, *CCE recommends that the Equity Advisory Board described in Section 1(f) be amended to require that all members be comprised of persons from communities that are overburdened by air pollution and/or underserved by the transportation system.*

We know that the impacts of climate change will cost us all in the long run –through increased health care costs as well as the cost of future climate response and mitigation initiatives. The long-term costs we will incur by failing to meet this crisis far outweigh the short-term investments needed to transform our transportation system. *CCE strongly supports S.B. 884, and recommends additional measures to ensure an equitable transition.*

H.B. 6551: AN ACT CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL AIR QUALITY

Low-income and urban communities are disproportionately impacted by the impacts of climate change, air and water pollution, and other threats to public health. In 2008, Connecticut passed

³[http://www.dpuc.state.ct.us/DEEP/Energy.nsf/c6c6d525f7cdd1168525797d0047c5bf/f7ed4932eec438d085258552001c81b/\\$FILE/EV%20Roadmap%20for%20Connecticut.pdf](http://www.dpuc.state.ct.us/DEEP/Energy.nsf/c6c6d525f7cdd1168525797d0047c5bf/f7ed4932eec438d085258552001c81b/$FILE/EV%20Roadmap%20for%20Connecticut.pdf)

⁴https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/2017_GHG_Inventory/2017_GHG_Inventory.pdf

Public Act 08-94, which acknowledged that the siting of power plants, waste incinerators, landfills and sewage treatment plants frequently occurs near low-income and underserved communities. P.A. 08-94 was intended to ensure that polluting facilities would not be located near designated “Environmental Justice” (EJ) communities without meaningful opportunities for public participation. Unfortunately, the law falls short in creating accountability measures that could be used to intervene if a facility creates an undue risk to public health or the environment.

H.B. 6551 establishes an Environmental Equity Working Group at DEEP to identify disadvantaged communities that would benefit from targeted GHG and air pollution reductions. Such working group would provide critical data and insight to help inform future state actions related to regulating and reducing impacts from polluting facilities, in addition to evaluating health risks in economically distressed municipalities. This would go a long way towards improving air quality and protecting public health in our cities that already suffer from some of the worst air pollution in our region.

Section 2 of the bill amends Connecticut's existing EJ law, to grant DEEP the authority to reject permit applications if they determine such facility would create undue health and environmental hazards. These are both critically important changes to the existing state law, as they allow for much needed accountability measures in the siting of polluting facilities.

CCE strongly supports updating the state’s EJ law, and recommends amending the language to establish clear accountability measures for reducing GHG’s. These include:

1. Include language ensuring accountability for decision-making related to meeting Connecticut's obligations under GWSA.
2. Allow for citizen involvement/enforcement of the GWSA through a citizen suit provision.
3. Expand the definition of "environmental justice community" to include racial and linguistic considerations.
4. Expand the definition of "affecting facility" to include any facility that is highly energy/resource intensive and could result in increased impacts to air and water quality, public health, and quality of life. These include transfer stations, recycling facilities, resource recovery facilities and data centers.