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Dear Sen Cohen, Rep Gresko, and Esteemed Members of the Environment Committee,

The Interreligious Eco-Justice Network would like to urge you to support HB 6551, An Act Concerning Environmental Air Quality, which would create a working group comprised of community members most impacted by pollution and climate change, including communities of color and low-income communities. This working group will assist in developing criteria to identify disadvantaged communities with the goal of reducing pollution and green house gas emissions.

Air quality is not just an environmental issue, but a justice issue as well. And just as every faith tradition in the world speaks of caring for the earth, they also call for justice for oppressed and marginalized people. Low income and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by air pollution, with higher rates of asthmas and lung diseases. In fact, asthma is the leading cause of

school absence for children across this country with Black and Latinx children missing the most school. Chronic asthma flareups, exacerbated by poor air quality, result in numerous missed days in school and ultimately impact the child's ability to learn and succeed. Simply put, this is morally and profoundly wrong and our government should be doing as much as possible to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in these communities.

HB 6551 will work with CT's environmental justice law to prevent new polluting sources from being placed in communities that are already overburdened. We ask that you pay

special attention to data centers, which use a tremendous amount of energy and water to function. We ask that the bill be amended to require the most energy efficient servers and to prevent the data centers from using fossil fuel back-up power. In addition, we urge that the data centers be required to conserve water and heat with waste heat from the center with excess heat used for thermal energy storage. Finally, we urge that data centers be required to meet a net-zero, all-electric standard and to meet the sustainability requirements of the municipality in which they are located.

Thank you for your work on this important issue. With continued movement forward, Connecticut can be a leader in providing clean, renewable, sustainable energy while also protecting our most vulnerable populations and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

Very best regards,

Terri Eickel, Director, Interreligious Eco-Justice Network