

AIR QUALITY

Submitted 03-07-2021

To: Honored Chairs Sen. Cohen and Rep. Gresko, Vice Chairs Sen. Slap and Rep. Palm, Ranking Members Sen. Miner and Rep. Harding, Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

From: Janet Heller, 452 Adams ST, Manchester, CT, 06040

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **IN SUPPORT of HB 6551**. This legislation would establish an environmental equity working group composed of members from communities of color, low-income communities and communities bearing disproportionate pollution and climate change burdens. This working group, in conjunction with the Department of Public Health, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Labor Department will develop criteria to identify disadvantaged communities for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and co-pollutants in those communities.

Although Connecticut is a nationwide leader in the fight against climate change, the state has not done enough to address environmental inequities. Low-income and communities of color in Hartford, Waterbury, New Haven, Stamford, and Bridgeport are disproportionately affected by climate change, pollution, and other environmental threats. HB 6551 would help prevent further environmental harm to these communities due poor air quality and other environmental degradation.

According to the American Lung Association's "State of the Air 2019," Connecticut ranked 10th as the worst polluted with smog and given "F ratings" for ozone air pollution levels. When inhaled, ozone damages the lungs and compromises the ability of the body to fight respiratory infections. Asthma, for instance, is the single most avoidable cause of hospitalization, and yet Connecticut incurred \$102 million acute care charges due to asthma in 2018. Residents from Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Stamford, and Waterbury account for 18% of Connecticut's total population but account for 44% of the \$102 million of those asthma acute care charges.

HB 6551 works in conjunction with Connecticut's environmental justice law to prevent further "affecting facilities" (power plants, sewage treatment plants, waste incinerators, and landfills) from being placed near low-income and minority communities. Just this week the Connecticut General Assembly passed HB 6514 to incentivize construction of new, highly polluting data centers to be built in Connecticut.

Because data centers are one of the most energy-intensive building types, it is critical that this bill mitigate the energy and emissions impacts. Connecticut must do this to address climate change and meet out state's greenhouse gas reduction mandate under the Global Warming Solutions Act. The environmental justice and energy concerns include:

- **Added pollution burden on environmental justice communities.** There are concerns that 25-50 megawatt diesel generators are desired by the industry, and would add to the pollution burden of environmental justice communities. According to the Integrated

Resources Plan, environmental justice communities bear the disproportionate burden of air pollution from fossil power plants in Connecticut. Twenty-three of the state's large fossil fuel generating units are located in environmental justice communities, emitting more than 372 tons of NOx annually, and causing unhealthy levels of air pollution.

- **Data centers are one of the most energy-intensive building types**, consuming 10 to 50 times the energy per floor space of a typical commercial office building. Collectively, these spaces account for approximately 2% of the total U.S. electricity use, and as our country's use of information technology grows, data center and server energy use is expected to grow too. As we're trying to reach a 100% clean energy goal in the state, it is critical that data centers meet standards that will mitigate energy use.
- **All large data servers use water, both directly and indirectly, and the amounts can be very substantial.**

To mitigate these concerns, I urge you to amend the bill to:

- Prohibit diesel or fossil fuel back-up power to protect environmental justice communities.
- Require the most energy-efficient servers
- Require that construction of data centers meet a net-zero, all-electric standard
- Require that data centers conserve water by requiring air cooled or closed loop water systems
- Require buildings be heated with waste heat from the data center, and allow excess heat to be used for thermal energy storage and or community heating needs
- Require data centers to meet sustainability goals of the municipality in which they are located.

I urge the committee to **SUPPORT HB 6551** to ensure that Connecticut receives clean, non-polluting energy that protects the public health of our most vulnerable populations, as well as meaningful reduction of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. Thank you for considering these recommendations to strengthen this legislation.