



Testimony of Anne Hulick, State Director, Clean Water Action  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee  
March 7, 2021

Testimony in support of ***Raised Bill 6551 AN ACT CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL AIR QUALITY***

Dear Senator Cohen, Representative Borer, Ranking Members Senator Miner, Representative Harding and distinguished members of the Environment Committee,

Clean Water Action is a national, environmental advocacy organization focusing on protecting water and preventing pollution. We are extremely concerned about the health impacts of poor air quality and the long-standing injustices on residents living in environmental justice communities. Accordingly, we strongly support ***Raised Bill 6551 An Act Concerning Environmental Air Quality***.

Connecticut has been a leader in acknowledging the disproportionate impacts of pollution on residents in environmental justice communities. The historic patterns of racial segregation persist today and have contributed significantly to the public health harms of poor air quality from mobile sources, living near and surrounded by highways and busy streets and toxic pollution from incinerators and other polluting facilities. Thanks to the leadership of Dr. Mark Mitchell and many other local leaders, Connecticut passed an environmental justice law in 2008 that provided enhanced public engagement and more oversight by the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for siting of polluting facilities. Still, much more work is needed to right the long-standing wrongs.

The current proposal to establish an environmental equity working group is a positive step in the right direction. It is critically important to have at least five representatives of environmental justice communities and we strongly support that some of these members serve as chairpersons of any sub-groups. Consideration of meeting times and meaningful participation must take into account the needs of the members of environmental justice communities. Compensation should be considered as many of these individuals are simply not able to take time off from work or other obligations unlike other residents who do not experience the same struggles and inequities.

The proposed bill also establishes that the Connecticut Siting Council shall deny a permit for new or expanded operations of a facility if less harmful alternatives exist. We support this important section, as for too long, the cumulative impacts of pollution from different facilities have not been factored together to the extent possible when approving or renewing a permit.

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Many Connecticut residents don't realize that every county in the state received a grade of F for air quality in the 2020 State of the Air Report by the American Lung Association.<sup>1</sup> Residents living in urban and environmental justice communities are disproportionately impacted even further by chronic and short-term air pollution. It is widely accepted that air pollution is directly linked to exacerbation of asthma and other chronic respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disease including heart attacks and stroke, lung cancer and premature death.<sup>2</sup> A recent, alarming, Harvard study found that even short-term exposure to air pollution was linked to a significant rise in premature death. The elderly, African Americans, low-income residents and females were most affected.<sup>3</sup> Poor air quality is not only a public health issue but impacts Connecticut's economy with more emergency room visits, more missed days from school and work and more residents that have long term impacts of unemployment from health impacts of chronic pollution.

Raised bill 6551 will not only engage those residents suffering the most from pollution, it will provide more authority to disapprove facility and permit applications when determinations of adverse public health or environmental harms are made. **We strongly urge passage of this bill.**

Thank you.



Anne Hulick, JD, MS, RN

Connecticut Director, Clean Water Action

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.stateoftheair.org/city-rankings/states/Connecticut>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.epa.gov/air-research/air-research-health-effects-air-pollution/>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/air-pollution-premature-death-u-s-seniors/>