

[organizational letterhead, if applicable]

March 6, 2021

Dear Environment Committee,

I write in support of HB 6551: AN ACT CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL AIR QUALITY, and hope to have the bill amended to be strengthened to address data center expansion and language that protects environmental justice communities. This bill would establish a working group that will identify disadvantaged communities for purposes of greenhouse gas reduction implications and to amend the environmental justice statute to enable disapproval of facility and permit applications when certain determinations concerning adverse environmental or public health effects are made.

Connecticut has not done enough to address environmental inequities. Connecticut has poor air quality due to smog and ozone, according to the American Lung Association. Low-income and communities of color in our cities are disproportionately affected by this pollution, as well as climate change and other environmental threats. HB 6551 would prevent further environmental harm to these communities due to poor air quality and environmental degradation by preventing further “affecting facilities,” including power plants, sewage treatment plants, incinerators, and landfills, from being placed near low-income and minority communities. This should be expanded to include data centers, which have recently been incentivized through HB 6514 and have the potential to negatively impact state residents.

I would like to see this bill amended as follows:

1. Data Centers
 - a. Prohibiting diesel or fuel back-up power,
 - b. Requiring the most energy-efficient servers,
 - c. Requiring net-zero, all-electric data centers,
 - d. Requiring water conservation through air-cooled or closed-loop water systems,
 - e. Requiring heating from waste heat and using excess heat for thermal energy storage or community heating needs, and
 - f. Requiring data centers to meet the sustainability goals of the municipality in which they are located.
2. Language strengthening
 - a. Requiring state agency compliance with the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA),
 - b. Requiring community involvement in negotiations of Community Environmental Benefit Agreements,
 - c. Providing for citizen enforcement of the GWSA and Environmental Justice law pursuant to the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act,
 - d. Expanding the definition of “environmental justice communities” and “affecting facilities,”
 - e. Establishing fees for certain permit applications to cover costs to provide environmental justice programs or technical assistance to applicants and overburdened communities, and
 - f. Strengthening the notice requirements for environmental justice public participation.

I ask the committee to vote in favor of this bill with strengthened language as noted above. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Sincerely,



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