



## Testimony In Support of SB 884 with Amendments

Co-Chairs Christine Cohen and Joseph Gresko, Vice-Chairs Christine Palm and Derek Slap, Ranking Members Craig Miner and Stephen Harding, and Members of the Environment Committee,

We are here as a team to strongly encourage you to amend Connecticut SB 884, *An Act Reducing Transportation-Related Carbon Emissions* so that it directly benefits communities impacted the most by poverty, pollution, and COVID-19. This bill can reduce emissions from our transportation system and invest in solutions that invest in expanding mass transit, air quality monitoring, affordable housing near transit, safe walking and biking lanes, and expanded broadband. SB 884 can help improve public health, reach our state's climate change goals, and support an inclusive economic recovery. However, we must prioritize significant funds toward communities who are “overburdened and underserved” and ensure these communities have a seat at the table to meaningfully shape the program. The bill should at least:

- Explicitly address neighborhood level pollution where communities of color and low income communities often breathe the dirtiest air
- Should support workers by ensuring greater amounts of fair labor standards, workforce development programs, and diverse hiring and contracting requirements
- Ensure communities who are most impacted by our transportation system have a strong say in directing how investments are spent

In Waterbury our community is overburdened by disaster sites also known as brownfields, commercial vehicle pollution, and emissions from solid waste processing plants. Our neighborhoods are also severely underserved by a public transportation system built for a city much smaller than Waterbury is, especially our neighborhoods where Black and Brown folk live. According to the National Equity Atlas, communities of color in Connecticut experience greater pollution exposure than white communities, with an index ranking of 28 and 27 for the Black and Latino population respectively compared to 21 for the white population, and 18% of households of color in the state lack access to a car compared to 6% of white households.<sup>1</sup> This is even worse in Waterbury.

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<sup>1</sup> “Car access Connecticut,” National Equity Atlas, Policy Link, USC Equity Research Institute, 2021, [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car\\_access#/](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car_access#/).

For these reasons and more we encourage this committee and agency leaders to collaborate with us on further refining the design principles that will allow SB 884 to deliver remedies for our environment and ensure this bill will make racial justice more likely. Therefore we support legislative language that will:

- Ensure a strong and independent Equity Advisory Board
- Secure more than fifty percent of the proceeds from the auction for overburdened and underserved communities and for the remedies they have identified that will benefit them the most

In the words of Michaela Barratt, Waterbury resident and RACCE Youth Organizer:

***“There is a clear opportunity to provide aid to communities in Connecticut that have disproportionately suffered from pollution. Refusing to make the necessary amendments to SB 884 to ensure that underserved and overburdened communities get the aid they deserve would indicate that the State of Connecticut is content with the environmental injustice that is prevalent in its inner cities. Black and Brown communities in Waterbury suffer immensely from the pollution in the city. I have lived in Waterbury for over a decade and can attest to the lack of adequate public transportation, safe walking pathways/sidewalks, and the absence of pathways. These are all things that can be fixed if amendments are made to the current bill.”***

We encourage committee members to reach out to us so that we can further explain the design principles for racial equity and environmental justice we are advocating for to be included in SB 884.

Respectfully,

RACCE Team

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