

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6551

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL AIR QUALITY.

Vote Date: 3/31/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/8/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.
Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th Dist.
Rep. Anne M. Hughes, 135th Dist.
Rep. John "Jack" F. Hennessy, 127th Dist.
Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.
Rep. Edwin Vargas, 6th Dist.
Rep. Travis Simms, 140th Dist.
Rep. Anthony L. Nolan, 39th Dist.
Rep. Josh Elliott, 88th Dist.
Rep. Brian T. Smith, 48th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Connecticut has communities that have economic inequalities, health inequalities and overburdened with pollution. Populations are vulnerable not only to the pollutions, the effect of pollutions, but also the impact of climate change. The bill helps to address the environmental justice issues associated with pollution and climate change.

Substitute Language – LCO No. 6222

Adds date of October 1, 2022 line 54 Section 1(g). Adds Section 3 to amend Sec. 3. Subsection (a) of section 22a-200b to "ensure attainment of the state-wide greenhouse gas emission levels established in section 22a-200a". Adds Section 4 for data centers 1) backup generator complies with Tier 2 EPA requirements 2) within 180 days a new data center is operational the facility must follow a green standard, i.e. LEED, Energy Star, UL 3223 or equivalent.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

Department of Environmental Protection (DEEP) supports environmental justice as part of its core responsibilities. DEEP works to protect Connecticut's residents receive the same degree of protection to health hazards and environmental risks.

Steps forward to address the experiences of at-risk or vulnerabilities, science, and guidelines which are transparent and provide clear, predictable guidelines in the decision-making process. DEEP is working to develop mapping tools to identify communities with the greatest environmental burdens to inform policy decisions. The tool assesses pollution burdens, health disparities, and climate change affecting populations.

Deidre Gifford, Acting Commissioner, Department of Public Health

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) needs 1) to establish an environmental working group in discussion with the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Department of Labor (DOL) to identify disadvantaged communities that benefit from greenhouse gas reduction. Under proposed legislation, DPH is required to have two representatives appointed by the Commissioner. 2) HB6551 amends the environmental justice statute to enable disapproval of facility and permit applications when specific determinations concern adverse environmental or public health effects are made.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

The Forests Report in the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) noted the socioeconomic and health inequities in Connecticut's urbanized areas coincide with lower than average tree canopy coverage. Trees are important to urbanized areas. Trees can improve air and water quality, protect persons from ultra-violet radiation, mitigate harmful emissions, stormwater runoff and negative effects of urban heat and noise. Engagement at the local level about green spaces and specific tree planting and long-term stewardship for environmental and health is important.

Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director Connecticut Land Conservation Council

HB6551 creates a working group to identify disadvantaged communities to reduce greenhouse gas reduction and amend the environmental justice statute for facility and permit applications regarding determinations with adverse environmental or public effects. The approach lends to a multi-faceted method, and the Connecticut Land Conservation Council hopes this includes consideration of natural climate solutions.

Lori Brown, Executive Director, CT League of Conservation Voters

Connecticut has not done enough to address environmental inequalities in low-income and communities of color. Proposed legislation helps prevent further environmental degradation due poor air quality and other detrimental environmental effects. HB6551 assists Connecticut's environmental justice law to prevent new "affecting resources" from being placed near low-income and communities of color. Connecticut is trying to incentivize construction of data centers. Data centers are energy-intensive structures. HB 6551 must address the construction of data centers to meet the state's greenhouse gas reduction mandate.

Anne Hulick, Connecticut Director, Clean Water Action

Historic patterns of racial segregation remain in effect today and contribute to poor air quality and public health hazards from proximity to mobile sources, infrastructure and pollution facilities. HB6551 establishes an environmental equity working group is a positive step. The importance of having five representatives of environmental justice communities. Consideration of meaningful participation and meeting times needs to take into the account of these members. Many members may not be able to take off from work or other obligations unlike others that may not experience the same struggles. Compensation should be considered for these members.

Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, Audubon Connecticut, National Audubon Society

Audubon Society supports the substantial improvements to vulnerable communities focuses on that are disproportionately impact by historic and future siting decisions of polluting facilities. An environmental equity working group improves the understanding of the impact of pollution, environmental justice and vulnerable populations. HB6551 strengthens Connecticut's Environmental Justice Laws by creation of standards for the potential impact of a facility's impact on public health and environment.

The Environment Committee received more than 40 additional testimonials in support of HB6551.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None

Reported by: Steve Smith

Date: 04/12/2021