

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6479

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE RESILIENCY FUNDS AND PROJECTS.

Vote Date: March 3, 2023

Vote Action: JFS to the floor

PH Date: 1/30/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF THE BILL

Environment Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Allow Connecticut Treasurer to invest funds on behalf of municipalities establishing a Coastal Resiliency Reserve Funds maximizing the state's receipt of federal funds for climate resiliency projects.

JFS LANGUAGE:

Add language allowing such investment percentage for municipal climate resiliency funds to be 60 percent for investment in certain trust funds established by the State Treasurer.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner: Department of Energy & Environmental Protection: DEEP fully supports the concept in Section 1 and 2 but opposes Section 3. Requiring DEEP to submit applications on behalf of the state would not achieve the goal of Section 3. Because of the volume of applications DEEP would not be able to help all municipalities.

Erick Russell: Treasurer, State of Connecticut:

It is imperative we use all the tools at our disposal to reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change. Climate change is here, and we have a responsibility to respond to its effects. This bill allows municipalities to invest their climate resiliency funds with the Office of The Treasurer there for maximizing the impact of the funds by allowing them to benefit from lower fees and the expertise thru the CRPTI.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Christine Cohen, Senator:

This legislation would ensure that the state continues to forge a path to long-term protections and partners with municipalities in the coastal regions. The state treasurer can invest on behalf of municipalities and help alleviate additional burdens for some of our towns that will have to deal with sea level rising and other changes in the coast of our state.

Matthew T. Hoey III, First Selectmen, Town of Guilford:

As a shoreline municipality we are aware of the impact of climate change. Rising sea levels and extreme weather events are among our concerns. Establishing a coastal resiliency funds to help towns prepare will allow towns to focus their efforts to alleviate the impact of climate change.

James Finch Jr. Finance Director, Town of Branford:

The committee should explore establishing a state climate change and coastal resiliency fund. Once established the state could invest state dollars to match future liabilities, leverage federal grants and provide grants to underserved communities and could make its resiliency fund available to municipalities and political subdivisions.

Patrick Comins, Executive Director, Connecticut Audubon Society:

Climate change is a threat to the wildlife and people of Connecticut. Our coastal municipalities have a hard time keeping up with the impacts of rising sea levels. This investment will help protect our natural infrastructure and protect the environment.

Nathan Frohling, Director of External Affairs, The Nature Conservancy.

We are expressing qualified support for the bill. The bill helps assure that Connecticut is proactive in climate changes but there needs to be appropriate staffing to support the extra demand placed on DEEP. We have been working with DEEP and see the day-to-day reality of staff limits.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns

In 2019 the legislature adopted SB 1062 and this bill would build on the effort of relieving municipalities of the administrative burden associated with managing climate resiliency reserve funds.

Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association:

This bill reduces redundancies and helps offset future expenses associated with municipal property losses, capital projects and studies related to climate change.

Amy Blaymore Patterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council:

This bill allows the Office of the Treasury to manage Climate Reserve Fund Investments providing municipalities with another investment option to maximize the value of their funds. It is necessary that DEEP has the capacity with budget, staff and other resources to administer new and existing federal programs to maximize the benefits of these funds.

Jim Perras CEO, Home Builders & Remodelers Association:

The Home Builders & Remodelers Association would like to propose an amendment to Section 3 to state that Climate Resiliency Funds be prioritized when ever possible to maintain existing sewer and water infrastructure. We would like to include promoting efficient use of existing infrastructure and the development of new resilient communities.

Aziz Dehkan, Executive Director, Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs:

Many municipalities lack sufficient resources to seek available funding to develop projects. Coastal resiliency projects are well worth the investment, but might we suggest the bill be amended to prioritize technical support for DEEP.

The following also testified in support of the bill:

Lori Brown, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Donna Hamzy Carroccia, CCM

Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, National Audubon Society

William Lucey, Save the Sound

Alicea Charamut, Executive Director, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

Kayla Bartlett

Ralph Jones

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: March 8, 2023