

# Energy and Technology Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5358

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF GEOTHERMAL ENERGY.

**Vote Date:** 3/21/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/7/2024

**File No.:**

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## SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Cheeseman, 37th District

Sen. Kushner, 24th District

Rep. Chafee, 33rd District

## REASONS FOR BILL:

Geothermal energy is a promising alternative to fossil fuels as it produces carbon-free heat that revitalizes as reservoirs naturally regenerate with the Earth's heat. This bill give the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection the ability to forego a study on the feasibility of establishing a community geothermal pilot program. The commissioner should report to the Energy and Technology Committee by January 1, 2025, with the results of the study in line with the provisions on section 11-4a of the general statutes.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection: DEEP agrees with the bill because it offers the chance to make geothermal heating and cooling more cost efficient for rate payers and it lowers the carbon emissions associated with the thermal energy load of the states' buildings.

Claire Coleman, Consumer Counsel, Office of Consumer Counsel: OCC is in support because it would encourage lower reliance on fossil fuels. Which in turn, would assist with the states clean energy transition along with providing financial and reliability benefits. The bill adds another option in helping citizens heat and cool their homes.

## NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Michael Rosario, Business Manager, UA Local Union: Mr. Rosario and his partners are in favor with the bill because geothermal is a form of green energy that is sustainable and cleaner for our environment. It is reliable and can be extracted around the clock regardless of weather and outside factors.

Supporting Comments: For geothermal projects to be worked on by professionals who hold the S series license for unlimiting heating, piping, and cooling work.

Peter Millman, Vice President, People's Action for Clean Energy: PACE is in favor of the establishment of pilot projects of geothermal systems because they will speed up the electrification of heating buildings. Community geothermal can reduce heating and cooling costs, give operational benefits to the electric grid, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce ratepayers spending on keeping up with an aging gas system, and reducing reliability on congested interstate natural gas systems. PACE urges the Committee to direct PURA to develop a geothermal pilot program with the support of Connecticut gas utilities, stakeholders, and experts on network geothermal.

Nikki Bruno, Vice President of Clean Technologies, Eversource Energy: Eversource is in accordance with the bill. Geothermal would benefit the natural gas workforce by giving the opportunity to switch to jobs that support a clean energy future. Eversource has already implemented a geothermal pilot program in Framingham, MA which would serve 37 buildings for a total of 140 customers. Therefore, Eversource is looking towards to working with CT stakeholders to give DEEP the data they gathered in hope of helping them with their study.

Cary Lynch, Climate-Energy Policy Manager, The Nature Conservancy: TNC supports the bill because geothermal energy is a triple resource as it is an energy source for heating, cooling, and power; a storage resource; and a mineral resource. TNC believes there is so much potential in geothermal and it would be great for the state as we look towards a cleaner and more sustainable thermal sector. Geothermal energy tech is renewable, constant, clean, and has been studied at the state, regional, national, and global level. It is time to move past reports and go towards application of geothermal systems in the state.

Susan Eastwood, Chair, Ashford Clean Energy Task Force: Susan, on behalf of the taskforce, is in support of the bill but requests that instead of the Committee passing a study they should direct PURA to create a networked geothermal project. Geothermal energy has already been studied by our neighboring states of Massachusetts and New Jersey of which they have implemented programs. Instead of wasting time and resources the state of Connecticut should gather information and work with these states to start our own pilot program.

Shannon Laun, Vice President, Conservation Law Foundation: CLF agrees with the bill however, they encourage the Committee to amend HB-5358 to directing PURA to establish a regulatory framework for community geothermal projects. This would give a promising workforce conversion opportunity for workers in the gas industry, who could add on to their current skills in deploying geothermal projects. A feasibility study is not required as our affiliates of Eversource in Massachusetts and NYSEG in New York have already proposed

and began to implement geothermal projects. This valuable knowledge could be shared with Connecticut as they have ties to those companies.

The following people presented support and made similar comments as the above testimonies towards an amendment of the Committee passing a study of geothermal energy. Instead, they expressed that PURA should be directed to establish a networked geothermal program in the state.

Natalie Treat, Director of Public Policy, NECEC, Stephen Lewis, Chair-Legislative Committee, Sierra Club, Samantha Dynowski, State Director, Sierra Club, Margaret Chapman, Susan Eastwood, Donna Grossman, Diane Keefe, Nancy Leckerling, Alison Sanchirico, Kathleen VanDuzee, Janet Bellamy, Diane Jamieson, Sandra Tosi, Svetlana Wasserman

Audrey Schulman, Co-Executive Director, HEET: HEET presents comments in support of the bill that express how community geothermal can decarbonize whole street segments instead of our current way of one building at a time. It provides safer affordable and non-combusting renewable heating and cooling for residents on the street in an efficient manner.

Charles Rothenberger, Climate and Energy Attorney, Save the Sound: Save the Sound agrees with the bill because it provides reliable, efficient, and affordable heating/ cooling for buildings. Ground source heat pumps use 75% less energy than the traditional systems which would greatly benefit the environment.

The following people presented comments like the above testimony by Mr. Rothenberger and Save the Sound.

James Anderson, Katherine Coleman, Bradford Czepiel, Andrea Gauvin, Laura O'Brien, David Green, Katherine Allison, Eileen O'Donnell, Paul Eddy, David Green, Diane Hoffman, Alison Barr Zyla, Ben Candea

David Foy Crabtree, Reverend, United Church of Christ: Presents testimony in support due to his experiences with geothermal installations. Seabury, which he is a resident of, opened a new wing which was heated and cooled by 35 geothermal wells. It has been 7 years since they have been installed and Seabury has not had to turn on the boilers for heating. Mr. Crabtree urges the rapid expansion of geothermal energy in the state.

Aziz Dehkan, Executive Director & Allison Pilcher, Policy Director, CT Roundtable on Climate and Jobs: CRCJ supports the bill because it presents an important step in combating climate change and creating a cleaner and more resilient future for Connecticut.

Stephanie Jackson, Sophomore, Ledyard High School: Ms. Jackson supports the bill because she wants to see action taken towards climate change on a bigger scale and the implementation of the study would help do so. Geothermal energy would give the state a new source of clean energy that has the potential to solve issues regarding climate change.

Adelheid Koepfer: Designed pilot already being designed in her town to find the most effective way to build a community geothermal system for their affordable housing community

which was funded by a federal grant. Urges that it is time for the state to start implementing such efforts.

Nick Menapace: Is in support because it is a big step towards decarbonizing buildings and the reduction of harmful air pollution. As a teacher Mr. Menapace suggests implementing geothermal energy when building new schools since it would serve as a big educational tool for students.

The following people presented testimony in support of HB-5358.

Claudia Allen, Susan DeMilia, Barbara Doyle, Shirley McCarthy, Susan Miller, Lindsay Suter, Charles Weedon, Eric Drouin, Jennifer Kleindienst, Anne Penniman, Kathleen Van Der Aue

#### NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None presented.

#### INFORMATIONAL COMMENT:

Kim Libera, Earth Scientist: Kim presents the concern for caution when implementing geothermal sources because of carbon and what elements you may bring up to the surface when drilling. Also goes on to state that the procedure involves fracking which many people do not like along with creating landscape eyesores.

Reported by: Francisco Munoz

Date: 4/3/2024