

Testimony in Support of SB 961

An Act Concerning Carbon-Free School Requirements for New School Construction and Establishing Other School Construction and Public Health Requirements for School Districts

Honored Chairs Sen. Lopes and Rep. Gresko, Vice Chairs Sen. Hochadel and Rep. Palm, Ranking Members Sen. Harding and Rep. Callahan, and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee,

The undersigned organizations respectfully ask for your support of SB 961, An Act Concerning Carbon-Free School Requirements for New School Construction and Establishing Other School Construction and Public Health Requirements for School Districts, also known as the Carbon-Free and Healthy Schools Act. We believe the benefits of this bill would be far-reaching.

SB 961 will help the state reach its greenhouse gas reduction targets through building decarbonization. Connecticut is not on track to meet its emissions targets, largely due to a delay in building decarbonization. America's school facilities emit about 72 million metric tons of carbon dioxide each year, the equivalent of about 18 coal power plants or 8.6 million homes.¹ Energy efficiency and on-site solar are important steps toward building decarbonization.

School energy improvements protect public health. HVAC upgrades and improving building envelopes can improve indoor air quality by limiting asthma and allergy triggers like dust, pollen, and mold and by promoting temperature and humidity stability. The broader community benefits from reduced combustion of fossil fuels and associated improvements in outdoor air quality.

Energy efficiency and rooftop solar projects save school districts money. Net-zero schools require less HVAC maintenance and up to 80% less energy to operate than conventional school buildings.² By providing funding for feasibility studies and loans for upfront investments in improvements that create energy cost savings, SB 961 removes the main barrier to implementation.

Improving school facilities makes it easier for teachers and students to do their jobs. Studies consistently demonstrate that students learn best in comfortable, well-lit, quiet classrooms. It's hard to focus with distractions like extreme hot and cold temperatures, noisy HVAC systems, and poor lighting. Further, air quality improvements reduce asthma and allergy triggers and asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism.

School improvements create jobs and job training opportunities for local residents.

Workforce development requirements ensure jobs will be accessible to residents of the communities where projects occur. Sector-wide projects create a pipeline of work that can be used to train local residents for long-term careers in the building and construction trades.

Let's show Connecticut students that their education, health, and futures are worth investing in. Please support SB 961.

¹ Generation 180, *Solar Schools Toolkit*, <https://generation180.org/solar-schools-campaign-toolkit-download/>

² UndauntedK12 & Climate Jobs National Resource Center, *The Financial Case for Net-Zero Energy Schools*, <https://www.cjnrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/The-Financial-Case-for-Net-Zero-Energy-Schools-FINAL.pdf>

Sincerely,

Aziz Dehkan, Executive Director
Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs

Sean W. Daly, Business Manager
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 90

Chris Schweitzer
New Haven Leon Sister City Project

Adrian Huq, Youth Action Team Co-Founder
Young In Kim, Climate Education Committee Chair
New Haven Climate Movement

Katharine Morris
Seaside Sounds Club

Brenda Watson, Executive Director
Gannon Long, Policy & Public Affairs Director
Operation Fuel

Dan McInerney, Business Manager
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 488

Adrienne Farrar Houël, President & CEO
Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises, Inc.

Reginald St Fortcolin
Fridgeport

Nate Brown, Legislative / Political Director
Operating Engineers Local 478

Lori Brown, Executive Director
Julianna Larue, Climate Policy and Outreach Coordinator
CT League of Conservation Voters

Teresa Eickel, Executive Director
Interreligious Eco-Justice Network

Kimmy Reindl, Hub Co-Coordinator
Sunrise Movement Connecticut

Jody Barr, Executive Director
AFSCME Council 4

Amy Boyd, Vice President, Climate and Clean Energy Policy
Acadia Center

Mark Scully, President
People's Action for Clean Energy

Peter Millman, Secretary
Eastern CT Green Action

Sarah Ganong, State Director
Working Families Power

Bill Finch
National Electrical Contractors Association