Memorandum of Support  
Strengthening Connecticut’s Environmental Justice Law

HB 5103- AN ACT REQUIRING AN EVALUATION OF THE STATE’S ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LAW

BACKGROUND
Environmental Justice (EJ) communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change, sea level rise, toxic air and water pollution, and other threats to public health and safety. These neighborhoods are more likely to be in close proximity to power plants, sewage treatment works and incinerators; and frequently lack the resources to organize community members to object to such proposals. As a result, EJ communities are frequently linked to higher rates of asthma, cancers and other serious health issues than the rest of the population. According to the CT Dept. of Public Health (DPH), residents from Connecticut’s five largest cities (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Stamford, and Waterbury) account for 18% of Connecticut’s total population, yet they accounted for 44% of all acute asthma care charges in 2018.

JUSTIFICATION
Connecticut’s existing EJ law was written to provide transparency and create meaningful opportunities for public participation, whenever a polluting facility is proposed for construction within a designated Environmental Justice community. Unfortunately, the law has failed to provide real protections for the public in some of Connecticut’s most underserved communities and is in urgent need of an update.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS
- Requires that members of a designated EJ community be given ample notice and meaningful opportunities for public participation in any permitting process seeking to site a polluting facility within their community, including posting bilingual notice of such opportunities;
- Authorizes municipalities to engage in a “community benefit agreement” with developers seeking to build a polluting facility within a designated EJ community with five or more polluting facilities. Such agreement shall include providing financial resources for the purpose of mitigating any adverse impacts, including impacts to air quality, water quality, quality of life, asthma rates, increased motor vehicle traffic and noise impacts.
- Revokes any permit for which a developer has failed to provide sufficient opportunities for public engagement under the requirements of this section.

CITIZENS CAMPAIGN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS  
STRENGTHENING CONNECTICUT’S ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LAW

CCE is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment

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