

March 7, 2024

Connecticut General Assembly Energy and Technology Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3900  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

## **Re: Testimony on HB 5359, An Act Concerning the Composition and Expertise of the Connecticut Siting Council, and SB 301, An Act Concerning Energy Efficiency Standards and Grants for Retrofitting Projects**

Dear Chair Needleman, Chair Steinberg, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Jayson Velazquez, and I am the Climate and Energy Justice Policy Associate for Acadia Center. I would first like to start by thanking you all for the opportunity to provide testimony. Acadia Center supports HB5359, An Act Concerning the Composition and Expertise of the Connecticut Siting Council, which would add an expert on electric transmission to the Siting Council.

However, there are multiple ways in which this legislation could be improved to align with equity and environmental justice principles. Acadia Center recommends the addition of language that would appoint an environmental justice expert to the Siting Council. In addition to the legislation providing the House or Senate with the ability to advise and consent to the Governor on chairman appointees, bill language should empower the Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council to advise and consent to Governor as well. These changes would go a long way in addressing environmental injustice and energy equity challenges brought by the siting of electric transmission infrastructure.

Further, experts appointed to the Siting Council would benefit from a wealth of experience in distributive equity to ensure the benefits and burdens of the full scope of pursuing an electric transmission project are equitably distributed, particularly through environmental justice communities. Also, environmental justice communities and energy infrastructure-burdened communities must be given equitable consideration and funding allocation when identifying locations for implementing alternative proposals for undergrounding transmission projects. HB 5359 could further be strengthened by implementing a stakeholder compensation program similar to that of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). With the addition of language that allows/requires the Siting Council to provide financial support to engage in dockets, the Siting Council could enhance procedural equity and support environmental justice organizations and communities in acquiring adequate legal representation. As neighboring states have embraced similar Siting Council reforms, Acadia Center recommends enhancing HB 5359 to include greenhouse emissions reductions, climate resilience, equitable distribution of energy infrastructure benefits and burdens, enhancing procedural equity, and opening discussion on developing a process to streamline responsibly sited projects.

Acadia Center would also like to express support for SB 301: An Act Concerning Energy Efficiency Standards and Grants for Retrofitting Projects. The appliance standards indicated in SB 301 have been adopted by New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Maine, Vermont, and Maryland (among others). Connecticut has adopted several rounds of appliance standards over the last 30 years, and this bill would update those standards. Acadia Center

also supports the language in this bill that updates to the Home Environmental Improvement Loan Fund program, passed in 2023, with a process to allow grants and loans to retrofit multifamily residences located in environmental justice communities.

Thank you again for your time and the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5359 and SB 301.

Sincerely,

Jayson Velazquez  
Climate and Energy Justice Policy Associate  
[jvelazquez@acadiacenter.org](mailto:jvelazquez@acadiacenter.org)  
860-246-7121 ext.203