

# Environment Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5153 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
**Title:** AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION RELATED STATUTES.

**Vote Date:** 3/4/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/20/2026

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of this bill is to make minor and technical revisions to DEEP's statutes.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Added provisions regarding the definition of muzzleloader for purpose of certain deer hunting, the taking of Canada Geese by corporate entities and a clarification regarding Sunday hunting and requisite permission from the landowner.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

#### **Katie Dykes, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection**

DEEP Supports HB 5153 and appreciates the Committee raising it on behalf of the Department. **Section 1** This proposal will build upon other recent statutory changes to the Urban Green and Community Garden Program (UGCG) aimed at increasing its utilization. The change proposed in this section would allow areas directly adjacent to Environmental Justice Census Block groups to qualify for UGCG funding, recognizing that parks and green spaces in neighboring communities often directly benefit residents of those communities.

**Section 2** This proposal will clarify a long-standing administrative challenge for the OSWA grant program. It would allow OSWA projects that must close before an executed grant agreement is in place to remain eligible for OSWA funding, even if open space language is included in the deed or a separate easement is recorded, as long as the intent was to use OSWA funding for protection and the language is subordinated to DEEP's easement. This change will streamline the closing process and save DEEP staff and OSWA applicants time and money. **Section 3** This change is responsive to feedback DEEP received from the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, as will the Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council and other equity advocates who desire to see greater access to EV incentives for low to moderate income residents. DEEP hopes this addresses financial barriers for CT

residents considering the purchase of an EV. DEEP would like to refocus the CHEAEP program to assist residents facing the greatest barriers. This change aligns with “DEEP’s environmental justice goals and with changes being made in other jurisdictions to prioritize low to moderate income residents for electric vehicle incentive programs. This proposed change would enable DEEP to collect data to further inform discussions with the CHEAPR Board and other stakeholders on further enhancements to the program.

**Section 4** This section makes minor revisions to the zero-emission school bus matching grant program bon authorization, known as the Connecticut Clean School Bus Supplemental Grant Program. By providing critical gap funding, Connecticut’s supplemental grants encouraged participation in EPA’s Clean School Bus program. While DEEP has been working with districts to implement these projects, significant changes have occurred in the federal landscape. DEEP proposes to amend subsection (d) if 22a-101d to support municipalities, school districts and transportation providers being able to leverage a broader range of funding and financing support for any school district across the state seeking to deploy zero emission school busses. **Sections 5 & 6** repeal CGS Sec. 26-302, which established Connecticut’s membership in the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission (CRASC), and Section 5 removes a cross reference. The CRASC Commission is now defunct and has since been replaced by the Connecticut River Migratory Fish Restoration Cooperative, established through a multi-state memorandum of understanding in 2023.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

##### **Robert La France, Director of Policy for Connecticut, National Audubon Society**

Audubon Society Supports HB5153 because both Connecticut’s Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program and Urban Green and Community Garden Program are valuable conservation programs that need to be supports and expanded. Sections 1 and 2 aim to enhance the OSWA and UGCG programs for applicants: Section 1 would amend CGS Sec.7-131d(c) to make the UGCG grant program more accessible and equitable allowing, areas adjacent to Environmental Justice Census Black groups to qualify for the program. Section 2 would address an important administrative issue of CGS Sec. 7131g(c) by allowing OSWA projects the close early according to approved processes to have conservation language in the deed if the deed is subordinated to DEEP’s easements.

##### **Elizabeth Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA)**

The Connecticut Water Works Association, a trade association of municipal, private, and regional water companies, Support Section 2 of HB5153. It recognizes the critical importance of protecting Connecticut’s source water to meet current and future drinking demands, water companies are eligible under the states Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program for assistance to acquiring land to be classified a Class 1 or Class 2 water supply property. Such properties are preserved in perpetuity through permanent conservation easements to ensure that the property remains in pristine condition for water supply purposes.

##### **Maria Cahill, Senior Director, Government Affairs, Abbott**

Abbott is a global healthcare leader that produce specialized nutrition products that meet important nutrition and health needs and ser vulnerable populations, including infants and children, older adults, and patients with acute conditions and chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, gastrointestinal conditions, dehydration, and malnutrition. Abbott supports an amendment to HB 5153 that adds a clarification that “plastic beverage container” does not include any container for a registered acidified electrolyte beverage, as

defined by 21 CFR 114 and is processed by retort. The amendment also adds a definition of “retort processing” which means a commercial sterilization process whereby hermetically sealed packaging containing product is subjected to high heat and pressure to achieve commercial sterilization.

**John Triana, Real Estate Manager, South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority**

South Central Connecticut Supports HB 5153 because of Sections 1 and 2 of this bill which relate to Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisitions and Urban Green and Community Garden Grant Programs. Expanding the eligibility for UGCG will benefit more Connecticut citizens. The clarification of Section 2 will allow more parcels of land to become eligible for the OSWA program.

**Alex Rodriguez, Environmental Justice Specialist, Save the Sound**

Save the Sound Supports HB5153 because it will support school districts in making progress toward the goals established in the Connecticut Clean Air Act, Public Act 22-25. They support such legislation as it will reduce transportation emissions by ending the purchase of diesel transit buses by 2024 and requiring 100% of school buses in Environmental Justice Communities be zero- emission by 2030, and fully zero-emission across the state by 2024.

**Alice Kwak, State Policy Research Associate, World Resources Institute**

The Electric School Bus Initiative at the World Resources Institute Support HB 5153’s provision that would allow currently authorized state bond funds for electric school bus deployment to be used independently from federal grant funding. This revision would remove a key barrier that has slowed implementation of funds and help ensure Connecticut can deploy already authorized resources .

**Rachel Briggs, Staff Attorney, Conservation Law Foundation**

The Conservation Law Foundation Supports Sections 1, 2 and 4 in HB5153 because these revisions better enable DEEP to serve the needs of Environmental Justice communities.

**Barry Kresch, President, Electric Vehicle Club of CT**

The EV Club of CT Supports HB5153 with some concerns. The language restricts the Rebate+incentives to lower income residents and no longer includes residents of environmental justice communities who area not low income. DEEP at one time proposed a Community+incentive for such people and they would support moving to implement that. DEEP should include used EV’s in the incentives targeted income-limited individuals. DEEP says that the restrictions on vehicle age are to ensure the consumer does not buy a vehicle with a degraded battery. But batteries are required to have a warranty of minimum of 8yrs/100,000 miles so there is room to expand the vehicle pool so that older, less expensive options are available. The EV Club also notes that the updated bill language retains incentives for fleets that have been authorized for years but which have never been instantiated. The funds haven’t been there, and they believe that would be a valuable part of the program.

**Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, CT Land Conservation Council**

CT Land Conservation Council Support HB5153 especially Sections 1 and 2 which are minor but important amendments to the Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program which includes the Urban Green and Community Garden Program. Demands for both

programs are rising, in a large part due to legislature's continued investment of bonding and CIA funds. These statutory changes have not only increased grant processing efficiency but also expanded access to both programs, which brings in a wider pool of applicants.

**Mark A. Mitchell MD, CT Environmental Justice Leadership Collaborative**

Dr. Mitchell Supports Sections 3 and 4 of HB 5153 and he suggests an amendment to Section 3. HB 5153 should change the law so that the CHEAPR+program can subsidize cars based on their current price, which he believes should be up to \$35,000 or \$30,00 if they relax the model year requirements. He believes that used vehicles should be eligible for CHEAPR+rebates for the previous five model years.

**14 Citizens express general support for HB 5153**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Jae-Hee Bae, New Haven resident**

Jae-Hee Bae, urges the committee to oppose HB 5153 because it could weaken the environmental permit renewal process for waste facilities. They argue that loosening these safeguards could expose communities—especially vulnerable populations—to harmful pollutants and environmental damage. The testimony emphasizes protecting clean water, ecosystems, and future generations.

**3 Citizens oppose this bill**

**Reported by: Judy Ganswindt**

**Date: March 12, 2026**