

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5241 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE JUSTICE

Title: DEMONSTRATION PILOT PROGRAM.

Vote Date: 3/9/2026

Vote Action: JOINT FAVORABLE

PH Date: 2/23/2026

File No.: 41

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SPONSORS OF THE BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Environmental hazards disproportionately affect low -income communities and communities of color negatively impacting economic conditions, health outcomes and quality of life for these individuals. This bill requires that no later than January 1, 2027, the commissioner of the Department of Public Health (DPH) in consultation with the commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), establish a Triple Bottom Line Justice (TBLJ) demonstration pilot program. This pilot program would be established in a city with a population of more than one hundred forty-eight thousand. The concept of TBLJ involves the integration of evidence-based practice, rule of law and meaningful community engagement to tackle health, environmental and economic challenges faced by communities. The TBLJ pilot program must support the concepts related to Brownfields to Healthfields (B2H) and International Classification of Diseases (ICD)-10 Z codes. B2H is a methodology for community led brownfield redevelopment focusing on the redevelopment of areas where pollution, disease, poverty and violence impact the quality of life in these communities. ICD-10 Z codes are the subset of diagnostic codes in the recent edition of the International Classification of Diseases that document social, economic, and environmental determinants known to affect health and health-related outcomes. The goal of the pilot program is to assess B2H programs and support the use of ICD-10 Z codes to support healthcare for communities experiencing environmental and climate stressors.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Manisha Juthani, MD, Commissioner, Department of Public Health (DPH):

Dr. Juthani wrote that the DPH supports the Triple Bottom Line Justice (TBLJ) but anticipates challenges around ICD-10 Z code implementation. ICD-10 Z codes are medical billing codes that allow providers to document social, economic, and environmental factors. Z codes

combine social and environmental risks in the health record and claims data, creating an important data infrastructure. The DPH notes potential health equity implications of Z codes because documentation compliance of Z codes will not be uniform across healthcare providers or systems. Other states have incorporated social needs screening that encourage documentation of social risk factors, but do not explicitly require Z codes. The stated goal of this bill to reach 20% ICD-10 Z code use would require significant DPH staff time to develop and execute trainings for health care providers, conduct data analysis, and perform other activities related to monitoring uptake. If passed, the department requests that the pilot implementation be pushed to October 1, 2027, instead of January 1, 2027, to allow adequate time to identify a partner organization, execute a contract, onboard staff, and monitor the progress of the community-led redevelopment organization.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Herron Gaston, State Senator, Connecticut General Assembly:

Senator Gaston writes in strong support of HB 5241 based on the success of the Mount Growmore project in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Mount Growmore was formally known as Mount Trashmore, a three-story abandoned waste site that was a constant source of “environmental blight and community distress”. Mount Growmore represents a statewide model for hope, economic opportunity, and environmental health. This bill invests in the future of Mount Growmore Hydroponic Farm, Wellness Campus, and Learning Center. This community farm will address the root causes of poor health in its community. Secondly, this bill gives voice to our health data by promoting the use of ICD-10 Z codes which allow certain health outcomes to be noted as attributable to environmental stressors. Lastly, this bill proves that investment in determining environmental investment is economic and health care investment.

Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA):

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) supports HB 5241 because the Triple Bottom Line Justice (TBLJ) framework encourages policymakers to consider the impact of environmental and economic drivers when addressing community issues. CHA notes that environmental and climate-related stressors, such as pollution and extreme weather, can significantly affect community health and should be considered in policy decisions. The testimony highlights the importance of using health data, including ICD-10 “Z codes”, to better track social and environmental determinants of health. CHA also emphasizes that the pilot program would promote collaboration between healthcare providers, government agencies, and these communities.

Michael Duenas, Chief Public Health Officer, Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation:

Mr. Duenas supports HB 5241 and argues that environmental hazards disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color, worsening health inequities. The bill promotes a triple bottom line approach which means that policies should consider public health, environmental protection, and economic outcomes simultaneously. This bill would empower affected communities and provide tools and resources to assess environmental and health impacts of any development projects. Integrating health, environmental, and economic considerations in policy decisions would lead to more equitable and sustainable outcomes.

Mary Lee A. Kiernan, President & CEO, YMCA Greenwich:

YMCA Greenwich is in support of this bill as it provides through this pilot program, a step toward improving health and environmental outcomes in certain Connecticut communities. By focusing on the Triple Bottom Line Justice (TBLJ) model, the bill aims to address environmental, health, and economic challenges with coordinated, community driven solutions. This bill also offers an opportunity to reduce systemic barriers by working daily with residents affected by inequities tied to pollution, financial strain, and other environmental stressors.

Suzi Ruhl, JD, MPH on behalf of East End NRZ Market and Café:

Ms. Ruhl strongly supports HB 5241 as this bill would examine the unique and complex concerns facing many communities through a framework that addresses the impact of environmental and climate stressors on the delivery of sustainable healthcare. This bill provides a working definition of TBLJ and the framework “to unite environmental sustainability, children and family health and economic vitality through meaningful community engagement, evidence-based decision making and rule of law application.” HB 5241 also defines B2H as the “TBLJ methodology for community-led brownfield redevelopment in areas with pollution, disease, poverty and violence to transform contaminated properties into reuses that strengthen children, family, and community, resiliency, equity and vitality.” Ms. Ruhl also explains the use of ICD-10 codes that document social economic and environmental determinants known to affect health-related outcomes. She shares the success of the transformation of a landfill into the Mount Grassmore Hydroponic Farm, Wellness Campus and Learning Center as an illustration of the use of ICD-10 codes. Through the TBLJ Demonstration Pilot our state has an opportunity to enhance the return on investment for environmental cleanups, the benefits of which will positively impact the health outcomes of our communities.

Yanran Zhou, Student, Yale School of Public Health:

The Triple Bottom Line of Justice principles were popularized in 1994 and promoted as a sustainable business strategy. It measures program successes through social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity. The dimensions of this bill resonate with President Biden’s Executive Order 14096 “Revitalizing Our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice (EJ) for All” in 2023. The environment and our health are more interconnected than we may think, and advancing this bill prevents waste of administrative resources and encourages meaningful investments and protection of vulnerable communities. Connecticut has a decreasing trend in ground-level ozone and PM2.5 concentrations. However, both forms of pollution are still responsible for premature deaths in Connecticut because they can travel from other states. By integrating ICD-10 Z codes into TBLJ pilot programs, healthcare providers can better understand how environmental pollution compromises health.

Vanessa Liles, PhD, PT Partners:

Ms. Liles of PT Partners supports HB 5241 because the Triple Bottom Line Justice framework encourages policymakers to consider health, environmental, and economic factors together when addressing community challenges. The testimony emphasizes that many communities face environmental burdens that negatively affect residents’ health and quality of life. Ms. Liles states that the bill would strengthen community engagement by empowering residents. The proposed pilot program would also provide tools and data to better understand

the relationship between environmental conditions and health outcomes. Overall, Ms. Liles believes that the program would advance environmental justice and help improve conditions in communities experiencing disproportionate environmental and health challenges.

Julianna McVeigh, Campaigns Manager, Save the Sound:

On behalf of Save the Sound, Ms. McVeigh writes in support of H.B.5241. This bill will demonstrate the connection between health and environment through creating an educational curriculum for Brownfields to Healthfields (B2H) methodology. In addition, the bill directs DPH in collaboration with DEEP to create a roadmap to increase the use of coding environmental stressors during medical visits using ICD-10 Z. This would help to demonstrate the essential integration of health, environment, and economic factors as a pathway to reducing costs. Ms. McVeigh wrote that data is essential to informed action and this pilot project is an example of community experts coming together and leading the charge to enhance the environment, health, and economics for current and future generations in Connecticut.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Linda Dalessio, MD:

Ms. Dalessio opposes HB 5241 and recommends banning chemtrails which she states are a very real threat to our environment in Connecticut. Many other states have acted legislation banning chemtrails which contain heavy metals that affect out soil and air. Banning chemtrails should be the priority instead of this bill which would create a pilot program that addresses environmental and climate stressors.

Reported by: Abbygail Shaw

Date: March 11, 2026