

Energy Transparency for Home Renters (SB 979)

Dear State Representatives and Senators of the CT General Assembly:

We, the undersigned, write to request your support for Governor's Bill SB 979, An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Connecticut Home Energy Label and the Tree Canopy of Certain Municipalities.

- In 2022, the House passed a similar bill. On February 27, 2023, during a public hearing, the Environment Committee heard supportive testimony from advocates, as well as from [DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes](#), [OCC Counsel Claire Coleman](#), and [Eversource's Chief Legal Counsel](#).
- See [2023 SB 979 Written Public Testimony](#).
- On March 3, 2023, the Committee passed SB 979 in its [current form](#). On March 27, 2023, SB 979 was referred to the Office of Legislative Research and the Office of Fiscal Analysis; next, to the Senate floor.

Why Energy Transparency is Important for CT Home Renters

CT residents seeking to rent a home can't predict their total expenses without understanding energy use and costs. For renters in our state, *energy costs add hundreds in unpredictable costs each month*. Imagine leasing a car without the dealer disclosing miles per gallon!

Without accurate, predictable housing costs, renters are more likely to miss rent payments and lose their housing. Unaffordable utility bills and debt can also lead to health challenges.

Benefits of Energy Transparency, through SB 979:

- Affordable, predictable housing and utility costs *keep CT residents in their homes*. Renters and property owners both benefit from housing stability.
- Transparency incentivizes property owners to improve their homes' energy use, saving money for consumers, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and getting us closer to our goal of weatherizing 80% of CT homes by 2030.
- Energy efficiency saves ratepayers money and increases comfort and resiliency – *transparency about energy costs is a basic consumer protection*.

Key Elements of the Bill

- We support the DEEP-led process to develop a label by July 1, 2024, that will conform with national standards, doesn't require professional assistance, and incorporates public comment. (Lines 5-7)
- Additionally, we support the bill's requirement that landlords disclose their labels through online listings and upon request. (Lines 25-31)
- Finally, we support the bill's exemption of properties where utility costs are included in rent, as these costs are disclosed to renters up front. (Lines 51-54)

Changes to Reduce Administrative Costs and Enhance Benefits of SB 979:

We recommend that the burden to disclose the energy label should fall to the landlord upon receipt of the rental application.

Sec. 1 (c) 1, Lines 25-31. The prospective renter may not know to ask for the label.

We recommend statewide implementation and enforcement. If the towns with the highest energy burden can implement energy transparency by 2024, so can the state's wealthiest towns.

Sec. 1 (c) 2, Lines 32-43. We recommend that energy transparency be phased in *throughout the state* on and after July 1, 2024, or 30 days after the commissioner's release of the label, whichever is later. (Lines 32-34; eliminate Lines 35-43). This would eliminate delays and administrative burden that currently wouldn't

achieve statewide implementation until 2027. Renters search for dwellings by geographic location – not by town energy burden.

Statewide, phased-in implementation would eliminate delays, costs, and administrative burdens.

Sec. 1 (c) 3, Lines 44-50. We recommend eliminating this section, since the requirement would apply statewide. The more steps that are involved, the more delays renters will face when trying to access necessary information. For reference, federal energy data scheduled for release in Fall 2022 is unavailable as of March 2023.

Energy transparency is a basic consumer protection – including for buildings that are built after 2000 and owner-occupied.

Sec. 1 (c) 4, Lines 54-57. We recommend eliminating provisions (B) and (C), which would exempt dwellings built after 2000 and occupied by owners. These exceptions reduce market transparency; prospective renters in these circumstances still need predictable energy bills.

Further, We Recommend:

Including a budget for initial and ongoing public education and outreach. Ensuring that property owners have the information and resources to disclose energy use in their buildings is essential to success. Encouraging buy-in from landlords will also provide more opportunity and incentives to upgrade our aging housing stock with weatherization and energy efficiency measures.

Phasing in the labeling requirement over a year, beginning with voluntary compliance, leading to enforcement.

Clarifying that DEEP, as well as municipalities, have enforcement power. (Lines 72-75)

With 169 different municipal approaches, delays and inconsistencies will reduce the bill's benefits.

Next Steps for Energy Transparency in CT and SB 979

- Cosponsor the bill, and ask your colleagues to sign on
- Meet with us: reach out to Gannon Long, Policy & Public Affairs Director, Operation Fuel, at gannon@operationfuel.org or 860-837-0317

Thank you for your support of SB 979, and for representing CT residents at the General Assembly. Signed,

Acadia Center
Anne Decker, Realtor
Ashford Clean Energy Taskforce
Betsy Grauer Realty
Carol P. Congiano, Coldwater Banker International
City of New Haven
Clean Water Action CT
Conservation Law Foundation (CLF)
CT Citizen Action Group
CT Green Building Council
CT League of Conservation Voters
CT Roundtable for Climate and Jobs
Eastern CT Green Action
Elena Cahill, Branford Clean Energy Commission
Energy Security Solutions (Dir. Joel Gordes)
Habitat for Humanity, North Central CT

Interreligious Eco-Justice Network
Kent Green Energy Initiative
Kenny Foscue, North Haven Clean Energy Task Force
Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven
New Haven Climate Movement
Operation Fuel, Inc.
People's Action for Clean Energy (PACE)
Pippa Bell Ader, Sustainable Westport
Rebecca Weiner, Realtor
Ridgefield Energy Task Force, Chair Dwayne Escola
Save the Sound
Sierra Club CT
System Smart LLC
The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut
Vote Solar
Wilton Go Green

To sign yourself and/or your organization onto this letter, please contact Gannon Long, Policy & Public Affairs Director, Operation Fuel, at gannon@operationfuel.org or 860-837-0317.