

NEW HAVEN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Laura Cahn, Chair --- Kathy Fay, Vice Chair --- Iris Kaminski, Secretary
Frank Douglass, Jr., Board of Alders Representative
Doreen Abubakar, Xochitl Garcia, Florestine Taylor

February 27, 2023

To: Co-Chairs Lopes and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Hochadel and Palm, Ranking Members Harding and Callahan and members of the Environment Committee:

Re: SB 979, AN ACT PROMOTING ENERGY AFFORDABILITY, ENERGY EFFICIENCY, AND GREEN CITIES

The New Haven Environmental Advisory Council, the city board that deals with environmental issues, strongly supports S.B. 979 and urges you to support it.

Energy transparency, a key component of this bill, is crucial to the 72 percent of New Haven households who are renters. This bill aims to help renters plan better for energy use; protects renters from higher/unexpected energy costs; and is user-friendly for landlords. Other components of this bill, including sections on stretch code, workforce development and tree canopy, will help Connecticut reach our building de-carbonization and climate equity goals.

In New Haven energy insecurity leads to housing insecurity, and both have been shown to lead to negative health outcomes. We applaud the measures in this bill, which will reduce energy insecurity for New Haven and Connecticut residents.

Section 2, in particular, calls for energy transparency in renting residential units. We strongly support the process described in the bill to develop energy labels for rentals, which would require public participation, be in alignment with standard labels already in use such as HERS and Energy Star, and would offer flexibility to the DEEP Commissioner to determine what works best for Connecticut.

Key during this process will be ensuring that prospective tenants are readily able to understand the labels and utilize them in decisions about choosing rental units. The exemption for units that include utilities with rent makes sense, since renters know those costs up front. But exceptions for buildings built after 2000 and owner-occupied rentals should be removed, so renters are able to evaluate effectively their full range of options when apartment hunting.

The City of New Haven, of which we are an appointed commission, is a member of the Coalition for Energy Transparency, a broad statewide coalition, which has prepared the attached Energy Transparency for Renters Fact Sheet.

Section 4 addresses a municipal stretch code. The building sector is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the State of Connecticut. The stretch code allows municipalities to adopt the commercial and/or residential zero

energy appendix of the already adopted 2021 International Energy Conservation Code. We support this as an option to require greater energy efficiency to reduce our residents' energy burden, reduce local air pollution, and increase the quality of our building stock.

Thank you for helping achieve an equitable energy transition for Connecticut.

Sincerely,

The New Haven Environmental Advisory Council

<https://www.newhavenct.gov/government/boards-commissions/boards-commissions-listed/environmental-advisory-council>

Contact: Kathy Fay, Vice Chair, kathyfay@gmail.com

Resources

[Energy Justice Report \(Yale June 2022\)](#)

[CT Mirror, 2/2/23](#)

[Tree equity resource from American Forest](#)

Coalition for Energy Transparency Fact Sheet:

Energy Transparency for Home Renters

Coalition for Energy Transparency: City of New Haven, Conservation Law Foundation, CT Green Building Council, CT Roundtable for Climate and Jobs, Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven, Operation Fuel, People's Action for Clean Energy (PACE), Sierra Club. Updated 2/22/2023.



Contacts: Gannon Long, Operation Fuel, 860-837-0317, gannon@operationfuel.org
Melissa Kops, CT Green Building Council, 203-824-5001, melissa@ctgbc.org

CURRENT CHALLENGE

CT residents seeking to rent a home can't predict their total expenses without understanding energy use and costs. *An apartment renting for \$900 a month may actually cost the tenant closer to \$1200-1300 a month, with utilities.* Imagine leasing a car without the dealer disclosing miles per gallon!

Without accurate housing cost estimates, renters are more likely to become housing insecure. Unaffordable utility bills and debt can also lead to health challenges.

OUR SOLUTION

Tell prospective tenants how energy efficient the residence is.

- Disclose energy efficiency of home to prospective tenants who submit an application.
- Develop standardized platform for disclosing energy efficiency using energy scores from Energy Star, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Home Energy Rating System (HERS), Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership (NEEP), and/or other sources.

- Scores can be shared in red/ yellow/ green, A–F grades, estimated energy costs, or another scale that is readily understood by consumers.

How?

- Phase the requirements in so property owners have time to adjust.
- Require voluntary, then mandatory compliance; statewide enforcement to follow.
- Energy scores are already standard for Energize CT Home Energy Solutions (HES) energy audits.
- Provide trainings to property owners, rental companies, and real estate community for seamless integration in home rental process.
- In 2023, Governor Lamont proposed [979, An Act Promoting Energy Affordability, Energy Efficiency, and Green Cities](#); a public hearing at the Environment Committee is scheduled 2/27/23.

BENEFITS

- 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, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions as required by CT statute.
- Energy transparency enables property owners to capture the value of energy efficiency investments.
- Energy efficiency saves consumers money and increases comfort and resiliency.

REFERENCES

Energy Justice & Health in a Changing Climate, July 2022.

https://ysph.yale.edu/yale-center-on-climate-change-and-health/policy-and-public-health-practice/energy%20justice%20in%20ct%20report_443325_48542_v1.pdf

Energy Transparency: Using Home Energy Labels to Make Smarter Decisions. CT Green Building Council, Energy News Network, PACE. October 2022.

<https://pacecleanenergy.org/cten-oct22/>