
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5248

AN ACT CONCERNING ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND TRANSMISSION PLANNING.

SUMMARY

This bill expands the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) authority to establish energy efficiency standards for new products and makes related changes to the process for setting these standards. The bill also allows the department to endorse a third-party voluntary energy efficiency certification program if the federal Energy Star program is eliminated.

Separately, the bill adds to the factors the Siting Council must consider when determining whether a public need exists for certain transmission facilities subject to the council's jurisdiction (electric transmission lines, electric substations, or switchyards). Specifically, the bill requires the council to consider whether the project addresses anticipated future electric grid reliability needs.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

§ 1 — ENERGY STAR REPLACEMENT

If the federal Energy Star program is eliminated, the bill authorizes the DEEP commissioner, in consultation with the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) commissioner, to endorse an equivalent voluntary energy efficiency certification program established by a third party. The bill allows the DEEP commissioner to coordinate with any other state that endorses a program to create standardized labels for consumers.

The federal Energy Star program is a voluntary labeling program for energy-efficient products, homes, buildings, and manufacturing plants that is managed jointly by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the federal Department of Energy (DOE) (42 U.S.C. § 6294a).

§§ 2-4 — NEW PRODUCT ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS***Statutory Products and Standards***

Existing law requires DEEP to adopt regulations to establish minimum energy efficiency standards for various products (for example, commercial refrigerators and freezers, boilers, and residential pool pumps). The law, which applies to new products sold, offered for sale, or installed in the state, defines the products and specifies their standards.

Current law requires the DEEP commissioner to review these standards biennially and increase them through regulations if she determines that it would promote energy conservation and be cost-effective for consumers. The bill allows the DEEP commissioner, when determining a standard's cost-effectiveness, to rely on a multi-state appliance standard organization's determination that the new product will have a payback period of no more than five years. It also requires her to do this review periodically, rather than biennially.

Designating Standards for Additional Products

Current law requires the DEEP commissioner to adopt regulations designating efficiency standards for additional products, if she determines the standards would (1) promote energy conservation in the state, (2) be cost effective for consumers, and (3) not impose an unreasonable burden on businesses in the state.

The bill allows her to approve standards that promote water conservation in the state, in addition to being cost effective and not imposing an unreasonable burden on businesses. It allows her to determine consumer cost effectiveness by using a multi-state appliance standards organization's determination that the new product will have a payback period of no more than five years.

The bill also requires her to consult with the DCP commissioner when designating additional products through regulations. It specifies that the requirement to designate additional products is ongoing, requiring DEEP to adopt and amend regulations from time to time, and that additional products may include plumbing fixtures.

The bill additionally requires the DEEP commissioner, in consultation with the DCP commissioner, to adopt and amend regulations to establish efficiency standards for additional products if product efficiency standards issued or approved for publication by DOE by January 1, 2018, under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act were subsequently withdrawn or repealed.

The bill eliminates a separate process for DEEP to identify additional appliance and equipment efficiency standards. Under current law, this process requires the DEEP commissioner to adopt standards under certain circumstances if a state belonging to the Multi-State Appliance Standards Collaborative adopts an efficiency standard for a product that does not have a federal standard or a state standard in Connecticut.

Definitions, Test Standards, and Demand Response Programs

The bill allows the DEEP commissioner, when adopting regulations for products listed in statute or additional products, to incorporate by reference relevant efficiency standards, including standards with definitions that differ from those set in statute and any associated test standard for the relevant efficiency standard. These standards may require a product to interface with an electric utility's demand response program.

Conflicts With Other Standards

By law, standards established for products listed in statute, when in conflict with the State Building Code, take precedence. The bill similarly requires standards the DEEP commissioner sets for additional products to take precedence when in conflict with the State Building Code. It also requires additional product standards to take precedence over DCP regulations establishing minimum efficiency standards for plumbing fixtures and other water-using devices.

Compliance Documentation

With certain exceptions, current law requires new product manufacturers to certify to DEEP that their products are compliant if (1) the product is listed in statute, (2) no efficiency standards exist for the product in California, and (3) the DEEP commissioner adopts standards

for the product. It also requires the DEEP commissioner to adopt regulations governing the products' certification.

The bill eliminates these requirements, instead requiring manufacturers of products subject to any DEEP regulations on efficiency standards to submit documentation on a product's certification by:

1. the California Energy Commission,
2. the federal WaterSense program or a successor program that promotes water efficiency,
3. the federal Energy Star program or a successor program that promotes energy efficiency, or
4. a third-party certification body designated by the DEEP commissioner.

Alternatively, manufacturers may submit documentation on compliance with identical standards adopted by another jurisdiction.

The bill requires the DEEP commissioner to annually publish a list of the products that must have this certification.

Investigation and Enforcement

Existing law, unchanged by the bill, allows the attorney general to enforce laws about energy efficiency product standards and subjects violators to a civil penalty of up to \$250. The bill allows the DEEP commissioner to (1) periodically inspect or have inspections done of product distributors and retailers in person or online and (2) establish a process to anonymously report violations through DEEP's website.

§ 5 — TRANSMISSION PROJECT DECISIONS

By law, developers must get a certificate of environmental compatibility and public need ("a certificate") before starting projects to build or modify certain facilities that are subject to the Siting Council's jurisdiction, including transmission lines, electric substations, and switchyards. Existing law prohibits the council from granting a

certificate unless it makes certain findings about the project, including that there is a public need for the facility and the basis of that need. A public need exists when a facility is necessary for the reliability of the state's electric power supply.

The bill requires the council, when determining whether a public need exists for transmission lines, substations, and switchyards, to consider whether the project addresses anticipated future electric grid reliability needs by (1) creating an interconnection point for a future electric generation source or (2) relieving a transmission system constraint to allow for the unconstrained delivery of electricity from a future generation source. Any future reliability needs identified in the council's determination and any potential solutions to address them must be supported by (1) an ISO-New England study or finding or (1) the state's Integrated Resources Plan.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Energy and Technology Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 18 Nay 8 (03/17/2026)