

Energy and Technology Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5472 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE SAFETY OF ENERGY GENERATION SOURCES
AND ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS.

Vote Date: 3/19/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/12/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Energy and Technology Committee

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

[Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.](#)

REASONS FOR BILL:

As energy generation storage facilities expand in Connecticut, considerations regarding the safety of the towns they are established in. A fire in East Windsor in March of 2024 revealed that the emergency response to fires, as well as the funding of such a response, need to be further considered.

Section 1 of the bill requires that generation projects that have Connecticut Siting Council (CSC) certificates to report on incidents at the facility in a way that the CSC would like to have them reported.

Section 2 of the bill additionally lays out the workings of the CSC, and provides further clarification to responding to incidents at energy generating facilities.

Section 3 of the bill establishes a working group, convened by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), to evaluate procedures for safely resuming electric generation facilities post-extended shutdowns or emergency events.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The substitute language clarifies that a “minor incident” does not include the shutdown of such facility in connection with scheduled or routine maintenance at a facility and adds “A person employed by an institution of higher education in the state who has expertise in electrical engineering, or any field related to the generation, transmission or distribution of electricity” to the working group in section 3.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner Katie Dykes of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Commissioner Michelle Gilman of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), and Commissioner Ronnell Higgins of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP):

DAS, DEEP, and DESPP, welcome the opportunity to provide further information regarding the state's role in emergency response, regulation, and energy generation:

At DAS, the Office of the State Fire Marshals Office (OSFM) oversees and promotes fire codes, standards, and regulations to reduce fires and related dangers. DAS additionally has the Office of the State Building Inspector (OBSI), that oversees and promotes building codes, and has primary jurisdiction over the electrical code.

Local Fire Departments also provide immediate assistance during emergencies.

DESPP has a Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) that provides programs for statewide emergency management and homeland security. DESPP has a Commission of Fire Prevention and Control that coordinates with municipalities, fire departments, and regional fire schools for prevention or mitigation of the effects of fire and disasters through providing additional services. DESPP additionally has a State Fire Administrator that carries out the requirements of section 7-323n, administers federal funds and grants, etc. DESPP also has a Fire, Explosive, Investigative Unit (FEIU) that conducts cause and origin of fires and arson investigations.

In addition to these agencies, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA and the Connecticut Siting Council (CSC) provide regulatory oversight over distinct portions of energy oversight over distinct portions of energy infrastructure.

Claire E. Coleman, Counsel, Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC):

The OCC **supports** this bill, as it promotes greater transparency and accountability for electric generation and storage facilities operating in the state. Although emergency or safety issues with energy generation systems have been relatively rare, with more expansion comes further need for protection of residents. OCC notes that the Connecticut Siting Council (CSC) is the appropriate entity to record energy generation facility incidents. Additionally, OCC supports the provisions in the bill that expand the CSC's conditional approval authority to further include availability of emergency service trainings for local first responders. OCC also supports the working group established in Section 3 of the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Stephen Harding, Connecticut Senate Minority Leader, 30th District:

Sen. Harding **supports** this bill, given the conditions of a potential energy storage farm in New Milford, a town he represents. An online petition created to stop the project received more than 1,300 signatures, as residents have noted that New Milford does not have the water supply nor the equipment to deal with any potential fires at the facility. The Senator suggests adding an amendment to the bill that would put a moratorium on these projects until common sense regulations are established by DEEP.

Pete Bass, Mayor, Town of New Milford:

As the Mayor of the Town of New Milford, Pete Bass **conditionally supports** this bill. Bass appreciates the bill's intent to enhance safety protocols for electric generating facilities and energy storage systems. However, his support is contingent upon the addition of language that addresses gaps in local oversight:

1. That this bill must incorporate mandatory local input, that would ensure community voices are being heard.
2. That additional provisions be included into the bill that would require reviews and approvals by the local Zoning Commission and Inland Wetlands Commission prior to Siting Council certification.
3. That the bill should establish strong environmental standards explicitly designed to protect public health and safety, which includes requirements for environmental impact assessments, ongoing monitoring of air and water quality, and protocols for handling hazardous materials.

Jason E. Bowsza, First Selectman, Town of East Windsor:

As a First Selectman of a town with firsthand experience dealing with safety concerns arising from solar facilities, Jason Bowsza is **in support** of this bill, but urges further additions to it. The first suggestion is to have local governments and residents be further involved in the decision making behind employing energy storage facilities, to ensure that the communities hosting such facilities are adequately protected. When a fire broke out at a 3-megawatt solar installation in East Windsor in March of 2024, residents were anxious about the safety of the facility and transparency with how the issue was handled. This anxiety alone should be reason to support the bill.

First Selectman Bowsza believes that Section 2 of the bill should not be left to the discretion of the Siting Council. Preparation of and training on a local emergency response plan should be a mandatory requirement by any project approved by the Siting Council. Municipalities have little ability to approve such projects, and the project applicants should be required to provide adequate emergency response plans and such equipment to carry out the plan.

First Selectman Bowsza additionally suggests that Section 3 of the bill should replace the industry representative in the proposed working group to be a faculty member from the University of Connecticut School of Engineering.

Melanie A. Bachman, Executive Director, Connecticut Siting Council (CSC):

The CSC **supports** this bill, as it applies to all CSC-jurisdictional electric generating storage facilities. The CSC suggests that substitute language that changes "Chief executive official" or "Chief executive officer" to "Chief elected Official" to be added to Section 2 of the bill.

Christina Dahl, East Windsor Residents for Responsible Solar (EWRRS):

EWRRS **strongly supports** this bill. East Windsor hosts one of the largest concentrations of utility scale solar in the state, and its residents want to ensure safety going forward. Solar fires cannot be fought like normal fires, so training is necessary for emergency responders. Many facilities are being built in areas with no public water supply, so the emergency contact requirements and reporting structure in the bill are critical for towns that have solar facilities with this condition. The current design and safety practices leave firefighters with no ability to suppress major solar fires since solar facilities cannot be de-energized, indicating that the structure needs to be changed. Additionally, emergency access design is inconsistent and often inadequate. This bill addresses this concern, as it gives the CSC authority to require emergency services training. This bill is also essential for statewide equity, and cumulative burden fairness.

James Berardino, Legislative Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST):

COST is **in support** of this bill. Currently, towns with significant solar-generation facilities are facing major safety concerns with very little say in the development of such projects. COST suggests that Section 2 of this bill will not solve the overarching issue and should additionally give municipalities and regional councils of governments a stronger voice on the CT Siting Council.

Jodie Maro, Coordinator, Bristol Residents for Clean Air (BRCA):

BRCA supports this bill but wants to notify the committee of a gap in the bill. As written, the reporting of incidents are triggered by shutdowns, emergency responses, and injuries requiring hospitalizations, which may not capture some of the most serious risks associated with facilities, such as those that handle medical waste.

Leslie Frey, Manchester Board of Directors, Tom Topping, Marie Urbanetti, and Laurie Robinson:

Support this bill and the proposed solar installation on open space farmland in Manchester, Connecticut. The Manchester Land Trust and Manchester's Conservation Commission are also opposed to the project.

Annie Amen, Business Owner and New Milford Resident, Sounds Incredible Mobile:

As a New Milford Resident that lives very close to the proposed Flatiron/Treebeard Battery Energy Storage System site on Aspetuck Ridge Road, Annie is **in support** of this bill. However, she urgently requests that the bill be amended to impose a moratorium on the permitting, funding, and construction of new lithium-ion BESS facilities until the DEEP has established enforceable standards that ensure the public health and safety of all residents are protected. The proposed Energy Storage System site would be built in a flood zone that is surrounded by wetlands and wildlife, very close to people's homes. It includes the water supply that her and her neighbors drink, and this site could jeopardize that water. Lithium-ion batteries are less efficient in cold weather, and the technology that is being proposed may not give facilities the promised energy storage capacity in the coldest months of the year. Annie additionally suggests that the committee evaluated emerging iron-air battery technology.

Amanda Berube, East Windsor Resident:

As someone who has lived next to a solar facility for over three years that has had multiple explosions, Amanda **is in support** of this bill, but suggests that further policy discussions are needed to consider how local emergency services can be supported as energy infrastructure expands.

Stephanie Phillips:

Supports this bill, as she has firsthand experience of how critical these safeguards can be, where a fire occurred at the Nextera solar facility near her neighborhood in Broad Book, Connecticut in early 2025. That facility has been out of operation since September 2025 due to an explosion. She notes how this instance is proof that this bill is necessary for the safety of Connecticut residents.

TWO Individuals supported the bill, and urge the legislature to add an additional amendment that would consider a temporary moratorium on grid-scale energy generation and energy storage facilities in environmentally sensitive areas:

Anonymous 37, Anonymous, Brittany Carlson, Jeffrey r fish, Erin Gibeau, Mandi MacDonald, Meredith Quaranta, Hilary Ram, Carol Tyrer, Monica Walsh

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Samuel Brauer, Nanotech Plus LLC:

With firsthand experience in dealing with an out of state developer of lithium-ion battery storage technology, Brauer **opposes** this bill. Brauer believes that developers do not have a clear understanding of the economics and physical risks of the projects that they employ, and they believe that little funding for firefighters will be ample resources necessary for employing such facilities. Instead of the current language, the committee should write legislation that bans batteries that can go into thermal runaway in large scale installations. Less energy dense batteries have far greater construction requirements than lithium-ion batteries, which would then require far more local jobs. Additionally, there is an economic risk to current lithium-ion batteries.

Francis Pullaro, President, ReNew Northeast:

RENEW opposes this bill, as new requirements have significant shortcomings. RENEW believes that the definition of 'minor incident' in Section 1 of the bill is too ambiguous, and without clearer thresholds tied to actual safety impact, operators will face an administrative reporting burden. Section 2 of the bill describes training conditions that are too open-ended and unpredictable, and Section 3 of the bill provides a timeline for a working group that is too unrealistic.

Tom Kapsiak, New Milford Resident:

Opposes this bill, as he believes that it does not adequately address the concerns that have been raised regarding grid scale BESS facilities. Kapsiak suggests that this bill should be revised to include a statewide moratorium on the permitting of future grid scale BESS facilities. The concerns regarding grid connected BESS facilities are that there is a negative environmental impact on the construction of such facilities, that there are various hazards associated with thermal runaway events, and that there is a significant impact on the property value and insurability of properties that are located near a BESS facility.

Percy Faith:

Opposes this bill as it does not have targeted details and cost.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Laurie Burstein, First Selectman, Town of Ellington:

As First Selectman of the Town of Ellington, a small town that is impacted by numerous Large-Scale solar energy projects, some of which involve leases that the town is only now becoming aware of and intend to challenge as it will impact the town's status as an agricultural town, Burstein is encouraged to see this bill's attempt to address emergency service protocols.

Section 2 of the bill is an important step, but no municipality should bear the financial burden associated with preparing for emergencies at energy storage facilities. The applicants should pay for any costs related to emergency response preparedness.

The working group established in Section 3 should not have a representative from the industry as part of the working group, as it is a conflict of interest, and instead should include experts from a University with Engineering experts.

Joe Quaranta, President, New Milford Clean Water Coalition (NMCWC):

NMCWC believes that the bill appropriately addresses incident reporting and emergency response training, but they believe that it does not currently establish baseline standards for addressing impacts to environmentally sensitive areas, public and private water supplies, or minimum public health and safety review standards for siting council approval. NMCWC suggests that this bill includes a requirement for the CSC to conduct an environmental and public health review before a facility is established. They additionally suggest a requirement for definitive siting requirements for environmentally sensitive areas, protection of public and private water supplies, and coordination with environmental and water resource agencies. Lastly, they urge the Committee to put a temporary moratorium pending the development of minimum standards.

Cindy Davis, Retired public school teacher:

Asks that the Committee addresses the necessity to pause or health energy generation sources until property safety standards are met, which will in turn protect the public safety of Connecticut residents.

Nicole Paradise:

Appreciates the intent of this bill, but notes that firefighters cannot participate in public policy decisions, which may impact the discussion of this bill. As Connecticut expands its solar infrastructure, it should additionally expand its protections for first responders and firefighters.

Reported by: Abigail Lockwood

Date: March 31st, 2026