Environment Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-147 / Bill Status / Public Hearing Testimony
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY ON THE NEED FOR EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOLAR PANELS AND VAPES AND INCLUDING AEROSOL PAINTS UNDER THE PAINT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM.
Vote Date: 3/13/2026
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/20/2026
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

CO-SPONSERS:

Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121st Dist.
Rep. Brandon Chafee, 33rd Dist.
Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To study the need for extended producer responsibility for solar panels and vapes and to include aerosol paint in our existing paint stewardship program.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Substitute language requires a study on establishing an extended producer responsibility program for electronic nicotine delivery systems and vapor products, and expands the existing paint stewardship program to include aerosol coating.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner- CT Department Energy & Environmental Protections
DEEP supports this bill but has identified fiscal constraints as well as recommendations. Section 1 calls for a study to establish extended consumer responsibility programs for solar panels and vapes. DEEP supports the concept but lacks the resources to conduct these studies at this time. The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), requested the Connecticut Green Bank to convene and lead a working group of relevant stakeholders, including DEEP and the [Electric Distribution Companies], to develop

recommendations to resolve the issue of solar and battery waste that consider the environmental effects of solar panel and battery waste and the success or failure of approaches used in other jurisdictions ... [including] ... a description of the pros and cons of each approach, and an estimate of each approach's implementation timeline and cost." The working group met several times in 2024, and DEEP was a proponent of the EPR programs throughout the process. The resulting report contains information related to the different sectors that use solar installations. Most effective EPR programs with the least fiscal impact use an independent representative organization to oversee the stewardship program for specific products' end-of-life. The Mattress Recycling Council and PaintCare are two independent organizations that implement EPR for their market sectors with DEEP's oversight. However, subsection 4 (D) of the proposed bill specifies that the required study determine "the requisite . . . agency oversight personnel for the establishment of extended producer responsibility programs in this state for such solar panels and vaping devices, respectively." DEEP recommends that the bill language be clarified to include an independent industry organization to oversee such a stewardship program. Section 2 adds aerosol paints to the definition of paints covered by Connecticut's paint stewardship law. DEEP is pleased to see the committee's interest in the program, and the Department supports the concept of the addition of aerosol paint into Connecticut's paint stewardship program. This very successful program has provided convenient paint drop off points for Connecticut residents since 2013. DEEP's recent evaluation of the program recommended adding aerosol paint products. In addition, DEEP works closely with the paint producers that fund this program, the American Coatings Association (ACA), who are supportive of this bill. Until DEEP has adopted regulations incorporating into state law the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) rule that allows aerosol cans to be managed as universal waste instead of as RCRA hazardous waste , protective management standards would need to be addressed in the Paint Stewardship Plan for the safe management of the pressurized cans.

James Desantos, Director of Legislative Affairs, Connecticut Green Bank
They submitted a full study on solar and battery end of life solutions.

Cannabis Council, CT Medical, CT Medical Cannabis Council (CMCC)
CMCC urges the committee to proceed cautiously before mandating the new study and offers the following points for consideration.

- If retail stores are required to have a cannabis vape return box on premise, it would mean cannabis product is in their possession that is not accounted for in the seed to sale tracking system. This would be a violation of DCP regulations.
- EPR programs have a fee imposed at the manufacturing level to pay for the EPR stewardship infrastructure. This would add to the cost of each cannabis vape cartridge at retail, hurting medical marijuana patients who need the medicine to cope with their medical conditions. The higher costs of the cannabis vape cartridges will exacerbate the current problem of Connecticut products being more expensive than in neighboring states.
- Residual oil is very difficult to remove from cannabis vape cartridges due to its viscosity. In many cases, it needs to be washed with ethanol or heated—a time-consuming and costly process.
- The bill mentions partnering with neighboring states to handle the collection, removal, and disposal of vape devices. If this is the case, then a regional compact signed by all neighboring states must be in effect prior to the start of any EPR program.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Ruth Canovi, Advocacy Director, American Lung Association in CT
The American Lung Association supports this bill because electric nicotine products have rapidly become one of the fastest-growing sources of toxic pollution in the U.S., creating a more complex and dangerous environmental challenge that cigarette butts. Classified as both electronic and hazardous waste, these devices combine lithium-ion batteries, plastic cartridges, circuitry, and nicotine-laden e-liquid pods- each component capable of leaching toxic substances into the environment. Every year, over 150 million disposable e-cigarettes are discarded- five devices every second- dumping thousands of tons of plastic, heavy metals, and lithium into landfills, waterways, and public spaces. Unlike cigarette filters, which take up to a decade to break down, e-cigarettes never biodegrade; instead, their components leak toxic chemicals, metals such as lead and mercury, and residual nicotine into soil and water. Nearly 57% of e-cigarettes sold in the United States are disposable- single-use devices that cannot be refilled or recharged once their cartridge is depleted. Because they are designed for one-time use, disposable e-cigarettes drive both higher sales turnover and greater profits for manufacturers and retailers, while generating far more waste than refillable products, which can be reused or recycled. In the U.S., there is no federal law that governs the disposal of e-cigarettes, resulting in minimal oversight and limited guidance on how to dispose of them. Manufacturers provide no information for consumers, and their supply chain creates environmental damage long before the devices are disposed of. According to a Truth Initiative survey in 2021, 46.9% of e-cigarette device owners report that their devices lack clear disposal instructions, such as information on where to send used batteries or empty pods. Additionally, 57.8% of those who used e-cigarettes in the past month said it was inconvenient to dispose of e-cigarette waste responsibly. Improper disposal remains a significant risk, as many users fail to follow available instructions due to widespread confusion and the lack of accessible collection or dropoff sites for e-cigarette waste.
There are currently limited safe disposal options in the U.S., and a study would be helpful in providing direction on dealing with this problem.

Victoria Adams, Tobacco Program Coordinator, Southern CT State University (SCSU)
Victoria is in support of this bill because vapes and e-cigarette waste have become a problem not only at SCSU, but colleges and high schools all across Connecticut. As the Tobacco Program Coordinator, she works directly with people using vaping products. Almost 1 out of 5 students at SCSU reported vaping in the last 30 days, and they are unsure how to dispose of them. They are concerned about the environment but are too addicted to stop. Most ends of throwing them in the trash, recycling, or on the ground, which are all harmful to the environment. Vapes, especially those that are single-use and disposable, are a waste management burden. Encased in plastic, these products contain hazardous waste (nicotine, cannabis, heavy metals and other vola le chemicals) and lithium batteries. Current disposal methods are risky and costly. This problem is not just specific to SCSU. Our communities are flooded with these products; thus, normalizing nicotine and cannabis use. With over 1,800 registered retailers across CT, thousands of flavored vape products are sold. CT saw an increase of 42% in registered e-cigarette dealers from 2020- 2024 (DCP). Access to products is a risk factor for underage use. 9 out of 10 youth in the U.S. who vape, report using flavored products (CDC). PIRG reports that lining up the number of disposables vapes sold in the U.S. in 2023 would span the contiguous U.S. 3 times. When visiting K-12 schools, they are facing

the same problem. Bathrooms are closed, students are suspended, and these devices are being flushed down the toilet causing plumbing problems. Schools are looking for guidance on what to do with these items once they collect them. Here are some statistics.

- 98% are confiscating them at an average rate of 15 per month
- Most are eventually thrown into the regular trash or kept on campus
- Several students flushed them down the toilet, causing costly plumbing problems.

There is a need to educate folks and establish proper disposal protocols AND hold the industry responsible for the cost of such disposal. Our waste management partners are burdened with this problem and have experienced fire loss due to thermal runaway from lithium ion-batteries. There is concern from contaminated soil and waterways.

Hope Allen, MPH, CPS, Vaping Prevention Coordinator, Amplify Inc.

Hope is the Vaping Prevention Coordinator for Amplify, the Regional Health Action Organization (RBHAO) serving north central Connecticut. Hope supports this bill because they have seen firsthand how disposable vape products are creating a waste management problem. Single-use e-cigarettes are encased in plastic and contain hazardous substances. These devices introduce hazardous waste into the waste stream and create fire risks due to damaged lithium-ion batteries. The scale of this issue continues to grow. Connecticut now has more than 1,800 retailers registered to sell electronic nicotine delivery systems, a 42% increase since 2020. In conversations with school staff, they are uncertain how to dispose of these products after the confiscate them. At present, municipalities, schools, and waste facilities are managing hazardous products they did not create and are not equipped to safely process. Establishing extended producer responsibility ensures manufacturers help fund and manage safe collection and disposal systems rather than shifting costs and risks onto communities and taxpayers.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director- CT Council of Small Towns (COST)

COST supports efforts to examine the viability of an EPR program for solar panels. They support the use of solar PV systems; we need to make sure the decommissioned panels are disposed of properly. It also makes sense to explore expanding paint stewardship to include aerosol paints.

Kathy Hanley, Program Manager, Western CT Coalition (WCTC)

Kathy is a Certified Prevention Specialist and is employed by WCTC, the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization (RBHAO). She helps manage the Underage Nicotine Prevention Program utilizing Juul settlement funds. She supports this bill because the public does not know how to dispose of them; it's causing problems for waste management, and the industry should be held responsible. Nicotine and cannabis are not safe for those under the age of 21, as it poses serious health risks. While the majority of CT youth and young adults are not vaping, rates among high schoolers in CT were 11.5% (2023 YRBS) and 14.5% among those aged 18-24, (DPH, BRFSS, 2023). Vape devices are also used to ingest cannabis (among those teens who reported vaping, 9.8% vaped cannabis). Cannabis use rates (by all means of ingestion) among teens in CT is 14.7% (2023 YRBS); and 25.3% among young adults (age 18-34). With a 42% increase in e-cigarette dealers from 2020, access to products puts youth at risk for underage use. Our workgroup recently published an infographic (see attachment to this testimony) to help educate all members of the community in CT about the vape waste problem and how they can get involved.

Jennifer Jones, Executive Director, Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority (HRRA)

The HRRA supports this bill with a few modifications. When solar panels are at the end of their life, residents do not know how to dispose of them. Most municipalities do not accept solar panels, and the closest known recycler is in New Jersey. With solar adoption continuing to rise, this problem will only grow worse. The HRRA supports the need for a study too:

- Identify best practices for end-of-life management of solar panels;
- Evaluate available recycling technologies and regional capacity;
- Assess the financial and operational impacts on municipalities and residents;
- Determine whether an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system is the most effective and equitable solution for Connecticut.

Vapes are one of the most difficult materials for municipalities to dispose of because they do not fit with any existing category of the waste stream. (See testimony for graphics)

- Solid waste facilities don't want them.
- Recyclers don't want them—plastic casing does not make an item recyclable.
- E-waste vendors don't want them—they are far more than electronics as they contain toxic liquids.
- Even hazardous waste vendors have historically refused them.

They also wish to add nitrous oxide cylinders to the study. They recently had an incident where a vehicle arrived at their facility with an entire load of nitrous oxide cylinders, all from one apartment. At that moment, I was quoted approximately $4,000 for disposal on the spot. Today, under our current agreement, the cost would be $150 per cylinder, meaning that particular load would now cost $6,750 to process. For a municipal program, that cost is staggering. The reality is:

- We are seeing these cylinders more frequently.
- They are being sold in vape shops for recreational use.
- Residents are finding them discarded on roadsides and are asking if they can bring them to our Household Hazardous Waste events.
- Scrap yards will not take them.
- No local outlets accept them.
- Our only current option is our HHW vendor, who must then send them to an out-of-state processor.

Amanda Kennedy, Executive Director, Southeastern CT Council of Governments (SECOG)

SECOG supports this bill because most of southeastern Connecticut's municipalities have seen an increase in solid waste disposal costs. Specifically highlighting the need for EPR programs and pursuing strategies such as food waste diversion.

Talia Lent, Program Coordinator, RBHAO R1 Catalyst CT The Hub

Talia works for Catalyst CT The Hub, and over the past eight months, has delivered resources to communities and youth who want to quit vaping. She supports this bill as vaping deeply affects families, relationships, and the environment. She has learned they are a hazard for waste management, and it will only get worse as more shops open in CT. Schools are on the front line of this problem and do not know what to do with these vapes. Clearly, the manufacturers need to take responsibility for the problem they have created.

Heidi K. McAuliffe, Senior Vice President, American Coatings Association (ACA)
The ACA supports this bill as they are eager to expand their stewardship serviced to aerosol coatings. However, Section 2 does not accomplish this goal. As written, it places aerosol coatings within the definition of architectural paint, creating an artificial subset of the aerosol coatings market. Paint manufacturers are interested in accepting all aerosol coatings, not just those in the category of architectural paint products. To accomplish this, we have suggested modifications to Section 2, defining aerosol coatings separately from architectural paint, while grouping both under the definition of "paint product." This change in text is beneficial for all parties, including consumers, retailers, municipal HHW operators, and PaintCare as consumers will be able to manage all spray paint products through PaintCare and retailers, municipal HHW operators, and PaintCare will not have to determine whether a spray paint product is within the program or not.
The American Coatings Association proposes the following changes to SB147.

- Delete SB 147 proposed change "and includes any such aerosol or spray paint" from the definition of "architectural paint"
- Include the following changes to Definitions - Sec. 22a-904
  - Add "aerosol coating product" definition
  - Add "paint products" definition to include both architectural paint and aerosol coating products.
- Technical changes
  - Updates throughout to replace "architectural" with "paint products"
  - Updates throughout to enable either an individual producer or stewardship organization to operate a program (a facet of all newer PaintCare programs, even if producers do not exercise this option, it is important to allow that for the possibility)
- Include the following changes to Paint Stewardship program - Sec. 22a-904a
  - Update submittal date for a program plan to include both architectural and aerosols, removed historical submission dates from 2013
  - Identical update for the paint stewardship assessment
  - To align CT's program and audit activity with all other PaintCare programs, remove every other year fee resubmittal requirement.

Scott Cassel, Chief Executive Officer & Founder, Product Stewardship Institute (PSI)
The Product Stewardship Institute supports this bill because expanding the program to cover aerosols is the logical next step. Other states have already added aerosols to their PaintCare programs. This improves convenience, reduces municipal costs, and improves recycling. As solar panel waste grows, municipalities lack the method to deal with it. Recycling solar panels allows key resources like aluminum and glass to be repurposed. PSI is a national policy expert and consulting nonprofit that pioneered product stewardship in the U.S. Since 2000, PSI has helped shape 146 EPR laws across more than 20 products.

Kara Sepulveda-Fonseca, Prevention Specialist, Alliance for Prevention & Wellness
She supports this bill as she lives in New Haven, and encounters tobacco products every day on public transportation. She currently works for Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization for Region 2, where she leads community-based efforts to prevent youth nicotine use. While there are only four FDA approved companies that generate 34 of the approved tobacco and menthol flavored e-cigarette devices, thousands of illicit and unapproved devices remain on the shelves and are being sold at alarming rates. Research shows that 95% of adult smokers began smoking before turning 21, and our data shows that over 11% of CT high school students have already reported use. Most people do not realize

how bad these products are for the environment. The Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) reported in June of 2025 that nearly 500,000 vapes are discarded each day in the U.S. creating a major environmental burden with no feasible, sustainable solutions to turn to. Attention to this issue is timely, as the market continues to generate new kinds of products to lure kids in. The industry must be held accountable for creating these products responsible for environmental damage.

The following individuals and organization expressed support to this bill as well.
Eve Hein, Prevention Specialist,Alliance for Prevention & Wellness (APW)
Mark Irons, Executive Director, Southeastern Regional Action Council (SERAC)
Bob Wall, Chair, Sustainable Fairfield

2 Other Citizens Expressed Support

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Sarah Dzialo, resident
Sarah opposes this bill because government studies on EPR have become the foundation for government mandated recycling, disposal fees, and compliance schemes. It is best addressed by clear property rights, liability regimes, and contract enforcement.

Reported by: Henry Russell **Date: 03/26/2026**