

Written Testimony for Bill # 3920

By Stephanie Weiner, Owner; New England Smart Energy Group, LLC and CT Weatherproof Insulation, LLC

I am writing to give my testimony for the above bill. I am specifically commenting on Sect 22, Line 1031 calling for a solicitation of third parties to run the Conservation and Load Management Programs.

I have been a vendor of the C&L Management programs for over ten years. My company has served over 18,000 single family/multi-family CT households. We offer services in weatherization (Home Energy Solutions and Income Eligible Home Energy Solutions) along with working in the multi-family program and commercial programs. We also install insulation and windows and offer HVAC, Solar, mold and asbestos remediation installation through our partners.

As most of you know, our program has been through many ups and downs over the years. In 2017, our funds were raided to the tune of 75M (35%) and that really hurt all of our businesses. Then, after recovering and reinvesting in our businesses we were hit, out of no-where, with the COVID crisis and a subsequent mandatory shut down for three months. Initially, our businesses were suspended indefinitely. Then in June we were told not only that we would be allowed to resume working in homes, but that our incentives will be increased so more customers can benefit and take advantage of our great services and save money on their bills, in a time that they need it most. Because of these great incentives our customer demand has been growing exponentially, allowing us, for the first time in years to expand our businesses – purchasing new trucks and equipment along with hiring many new staff.

This story, unlike many others, actually has a nice ending that we are very grateful to both DEEP and the utilities who made this happen with so much hard work. We have been through many storms and now our program and businesses are in a great place once again. Of course, the residents of CT, the rate-payers of CT are able to really benefit from the generous incentives offered by the utility run EE program. However, this did not happen over night and more so, now more than ever– we need stability in order to maintain and grow our businesses!

When reading this bill that our program is being put “out to bid” to an unknown, untested third party, my first reaction is fear, and I immediately question expanding my business. Why should I, or any business invest in the future when our future, once again is unknown?

The one thing I know is our utility partners. We have a long-standing (myself over ten years, others much longer) relationship with them that cannot be replicated. They in turn have a longstanding relationship with our customers, they know their

and our market better than any of us (they serve them) and of course have the resources and technology along with customer access and confidentiality contracts in place so our program can run pretty seamlessly.

When COVID hit they responded within weeks and created a Virtual Energy Assessment working in partnership with us, their vendors along with DEEP. They also offered webinars and classes for our technicians to keep them engaged and educated during the furlough. When we were allowed to go back to work they worked with us on safety protocols and offered training and assistance in getting us back into homes in the safest way possible along with a generous stipend to pay for it. In short, they have been nimble, innovative and responsive all through this crisis and we have greatly benefited from their commitment and expediency, both the vendor community and the ratepayer at large.

I understand that we should continue to look for more efficient ways to spend funding dollars. A pilot can be initiated by DEEP and the Energy Efficiency Board at any time to see if one or more parts of the funds should be bid to a third party in the future and if that makes sense. Legislation is not needed to create pilot programs.

Currently, CT is among the TOP 10 of ACEEE “best energy efficiency programs in the country” and like many others in the top 10, NY, MA, CA, ME among them, they are run by their local utility. There is a natural relationship between energy supplier and energy efficiency programs, for ease of business and reasons mentioned earlier and also for familiarity/confidentiality reasons, especially when they are run by the same entity that works and lives in their own communities.

I am all for “efficiency” and funds being spent fairly and effectively with transparency. That is why I believe bidding out our top rated EE program, especially at this point in time, will do nothing but cause chaos, confusion and loss of funds in a program that has seen too many changes and is now poised to enter a very successful, effective and prosperous phase for all involved; vendors, EE businesses and especially CT rate payers who have been thrilled with the new enhancements to our EE program.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify and would be more than happy to speak with any one if they would like to discuss the matter.

Most sincerely,

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