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Education Committee
Testimony of Martin Mador
In Support of
7346 AAC Green School Buildings and
the Gross Earnings Tax on Diesel Fuel for School Buses
March 12, 2007

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT. I am the legislative and political chair for Ct. Sierra Club. I am here today on behalf of the 12,000 Sierra members who live in Connecticut. Sierra is the nation's oldest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. I am also here as the legislative co-chair for the Connecticut Foundation for Environmentally Safe Schools. Professionally, I conduct research in architecture at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. I am a US Green Building Council LEED accredited professional, and have been testifying on the need for green schools here every year since 2002.

This bill provides for an increase of 5% in the reimbursement rate for districts which build a school to green standards. Whether it is through an incentive like this one or a mandate, getting the towns to build green schools is good public policy. Many case studies, from Massachusetts, New Jersey, and across the country now convincingly demonstrate the manifold advantages of building a green school.

Here are just a few of the many reasons:

Green schools focus on the health of the indoor environment. They create optimal spaces for children to study and learn. Studies show statistically significant correlation of daylighting and test scores. Control of CO₂ levels is directly linked with alertness and drowsiness. Avoidance of materials with high VOC levels in paints, adhesives, and carpets minimize exposure to toxins. Children who are healthy and alert are better learners, and have decreased absenteeism.

Green schools are energy efficient. They consume far less fossil fuel energy than their "archaic" counterpart schools. Therefore, they emit both fewer greenhouse gases and atmospheric contaminants.

Green schools save money. The small increased capital costs (around 2% for LEED Silver Certification) are quickly paid off by dramatically reduced energy costs. After a few years, and as long as the school stands, the district will save significant operating costs.

Green schools become teaching venues. They become places to learn the importance of environmental values, such as energy; water consumption; habitat impacts of buildings; waste, recycling, and landfills; stormwater management; and waste water.

Green schools minimize the environmental impact of the building on its surroundings.

Green schools require commissioning, a process which guarantees to the owner that the building will perform as designed, and as paid for.

In sum, Green Schools provide a host of benefits to the district, to the students, to the teachers, and to the community. As our knowledge of the importance of building green grows, schools which have been built to green standards have become recognized as more desirable places for students, and the districts which built them have earned reputations as leaders in the educational community.

Our design professionals have traveled up the learning curve. They know how to design and build green. There is simply no excuse for doing otherwise, other than the inertia which accompanies anything new. This committee should take the strongest possible measures to ensure that every one of our future schools are built healthy, safe, and economical. In short, green.