



**Testimony of Abraham Scarr, Director
Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG)
in support of
Raised Bill 6437, An Act Concerning a Mattress Stewardship Program**

Chairperson Meyer, Chairperson Gentile, members of the committee: my name is Abe Scarr and I am the Director of the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Raised Bill 6437, An Act Concerning a Mattress Stewardship Program.

The way Connecticut handles the material we waste is expensive, a threat to our environment and public health, and a waste of valuable resources. While we have a goal of diverting 58% of our waste from landfills and incinerators by 2024, we have been stuck around 30% for over a decade. The majority of our waste ends up being burned in incinerators, which release toxins into the air we breathe and do not eliminate the need for landfills – we produce half a million tons of toxic ash every year, all of which we landfill either here in Connecticut or increasingly out of state as we run out of in-state capacity for incinerator ash.

There is a better way – communities from San Francisco to Nantucket have greatly increased reuse, recycling and composting by adopting zero waste policies, achieving waste diversion rates of over 80% and 90% respectively. Zero waste is not some pie in the sky idea. It is simply a shift of perspective: from seeing yard and food scraps as waste to seeing compost and renewable energy; from seeing fuel for incinerators to seeing commodities with market value; from a seeing a disposal problem to seeing an economic opportunity.

Connecticut is beginning to shift its perspective. Last week Governor Malloy and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner Esty announced the creation of the Recycling Market Development Council, one of the recommendations of the Governor’s Modernizing Recycling Working Group. Reusing and recycling material recovers more value, recovers more energy, creates more jobs, and has less of a negative environmental and public health impact than burning material to generate energy. Modernizing our systems for collecting a recycling material goes hand and hand with developing the markets for those recycled materials in Connecticut and the region.

Raised Bill 6437 is an excellent example of turning what we currently see as a disposal problem into an economic opportunity. The way we currently dispose of mattresses is expensive, degrades our natural environment, and wastes valuable resources. Mattress stewardship will lift a financial burden from our

cities and towns (as well as many large institutions such as universities and hospitals), clean up our streets and streams, and have a positive economic ripple effect. It will directly create jobs in mattress recycling businesses as well as indirectly as materials recovered from mattresses are processed and purchased by other Connecticut businesses.

The bill follows the principles of Extended Producer Responsibility, wherein the producers of goods and materials are responsible for the post-consumer management of their product and its packaging. Currently, this management is primarily left to our cities and towns, and paid for with our tax dollars. Shifting responsibility back to producers has two positive effects. First, it relieves taxpayers from the significant burden of paying to manage the material. Second, it gives producers incentives to produce materials and products that are easier to reuse and recycle.

This bill was passed out of committee last year and passed by a large bi-partisan majority in the Senate. Since then the bill has been modified – without changing the principles behind it or its effect – to build even broader consensus within the stakeholder community, including the mattress industry. It should be passed and placed on the Governor’s desk expediently.

Finally, mattress stewardship should be seen as one more step towards shifting our perspective on materials management in Connecticut. The more we see value and economic opportunity where we once saw waste, the closer we will get to zero waste in Connecticut.

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