

The Energy and Technology Committee

Public Hearing, March 20, 2012

Office of Consumer Counsel

Elin Swanson Katz, Consumer Counsel

Testimony of Elin Swanson Katz

H.B. 5544, An Act Concerning Storm Preparation and Emergency Response

H. B. 5544 deals generally with the establishment of service quality standards for utilities and other initiatives with respect to emergency response. The Office of Consumer Counsel (“OCC”) notes that portions of this bill in some ways track portions of Governor’s Bill 23, An Act Concerning Emergency Preparedness and Response, and S.B. 450, An Act Concerning Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy. To the extent that portions of those proposed bills intersect with portions of the instant proposed bill, OCC’s testimony with Governor’s Bill 23 and S.B. 450 also apply to H.B. 5544. OCC would be happy to work with the Committee to refine the provisions of all of these bills in the best interests of Connecticut’s utility customers.

With respect to Section 9 of this bill, which concerns tree trimming, OCC is concerned that the language in subsection (b) is confusing as to the rights of property owners to request and receive a public convenience and necessity hearing at the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (“PURA”) if they object to the cutting of a tree or vegetation on their property. OCC believes that the language should be clarified to clearly state that property owners who have been notified that their trees are proposed to be cut or trimmed shall be specifically notified of their right to object thereto and to request a public convenience and necessity hearing by a hearing officer of PURA within the specified time constraints.