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## **TESTIMONY OF ENVIRONMENT NORTHEAST**

### **On Proposed Senate Bill No. 1032: An Act Reducing Diesel Emissions in School Bus Cabins**

#### **Public Hearing before the Environment Committee**

February 9, 2007

Alice Liddell, Policy Analyst

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Senator Finch, Representative Roy and members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Proposed Senate Bill 1032: An Act Reducing Diesel Emissions in School Bus Cabins.

My name is Alice Liddell and I am a policy analyst with Environment Northeast (ENE). ENE is a regional environmental advocacy and research organization with offices in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Maine. We are also a co-leader of the Connecticut Alliance Against Diesel Pollution (CAADP) which is a growing coalition led by Environment Northeast, Clean Water Action, Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice, and Connecticut Fund for the Environment.

The Connecticut Legislature has moved a great distance to get to this day, and with the passage of this new bill can take a major step forward on the road to cleaning up the state's fleet of existing diesel vehicles. Retrofitting school buses with pollution control equipment will reduce the serious negative personal and economic impacts of diesel emissions on our most vulnerable population.

In 2002, this committee first heard about health risks from school bus pollution on our state's children in Environment & Human Health, Inc.'s (EHHI) nationally recognized report "Children's Exposure to Diesel Exhaust on School Buses" Since then, the Environment Committee has held several hearings on the health and environmental risks of diesel pollution. In 2005, the Connecticut General Assembly, with leadership from the Environment Committee, nearly-unanimously passed Special Act 05-7, An Act Establishing a Connecticut Diesel Plan, which directed the development of specific strategies to maximize emission reductions from three priority fleets -- school buses, transit buses and state-funded construction equipment -- prior to 2010. Last year's bill SB 642 proposed the means to implement such strategies for these three priority fleets, but did not pass. Last Thursday, diesel activists gathered for an opening art reception at the LOB to celebrate children's art depicting the need to reduce emissions from school buses, and Governor Rell declared February 1 2007 to be "Diesel Cleanup Awareness Day" and called for the cleanup of the state's three priority fleets using pollution control devices.

Now, after five years of discussions and hard work, this new bill provides a way for the Connecticut legislature to put its mark on diesel clean up in the state. By passing this bill you will guarantee the

speedy reduction of diesel emissions from every full sized school bus in the state built before this year, when stronger Environmental Protection Agency diesel particulate standards took effect. This bill will ensure that each school bus is equipped with a closed crank case ventilation system to prevent emissions from the school bus coming into the cabin and that particulate matter from tailpipe emissions is reduced to the maximum extent possible within available funds. Since costs of pollution control technology have come down, we believe that instead of specifying the exact type of emissions control to be used, the bill language should reference the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and California Air Resources Board verified technology levels. For instance, EPA/CARB level 1 reduces emissions by at least 25%, level 2 reduces emissions by at least 50% and level three reduces emissions by at least 85%. In addition, the bill should reference the minimum required level so that buses have the ability to be retrofit beyond what is required.

There are several strategies that could be used to maximize resources on retrofits. Environment Northeast has helped to pioneer a rebate program design which would be used to streamline the administrative process, speed up delivery and significantly lower costs. MJ Bradley and Associates, an independent technical consulting firm, has drafted a summary description of the rebate program and how it could be implemented which is attached to this testimony. In short, the rebate program would set a price point for a given EPA/CARB verified technology which would cover the cost of closed crankcase filtration system, retrofit, installation, and warranty. We believe that replacing the RFP process with a rebate program will lower overall costs while assuring that the towns, boards of education and school bus companies are reimbursed for the costs of retrofits.

We are pleased that the bill allocates \$7.5 million to help pay for the cost of retrofits. \$7.5 million would cover retrofits for all 3,400 school buses with at least level 1 technology, however, if we had an additional \$1 million (\$8.5 million total), we could ensure that all full size school buses in Connecticut could be retrofit with a closed crankcase filtration system and at least a level 2 EPA/CARB technology, doubling the tailpipe emission reductions of Level 1 retrofits. We think the program could offer further flexibility by allowing communities to further increase emission reductions by applying the base level rebate amount towards a Level 3 control. Increased funding might also enable communities with high asthma rates to receive help in installing a Level 3 control. A series of scenarios attached to this testimony shows the quantity and type of emission control retrofits we could afford under various budgets, and was prepared by MJ Bradley and Associates.

When Connecticut passes this bill to pay for cleaner, healthier school buses, it will be in good company. Massachusetts recently received \$22.5 million dollars to retrofit all school buses and transit buses in the state. New York has retrofitted thousands of school buses with crank case ventilation systems and emission controls. New Jersey passed a law in 2005 that will mandate reduced emissions from commercial buses, school buses, waste disposal vehicles and all publicly-owned diesel vehicles and equipment. They set aside funding to pay for retrofits, a measure which was approved by referendum by New Jersey's voters.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we look forward to helping the committee with any technical assistance on this important bill to reduce emissions from school buses.

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