



ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
Testimony
03-05-2020

To: Chairmen Needleman and Arconti, Ranking Members Formica and. Ferraro, and distinguished Members of the Energy & Technology Committee

HB 5008 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIGH PERFORMANCE GREEN BUILDING STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTARY ADOPTION BY MUNICIPALITIES

I am an experienced home builder for the past 25 years, holding a Certified Green Professional Designation, and a past DOE Building America contractor who worked with engineers developing new energy efficient code concepts. As a home builder we mostly build very energy efficient and sustainable homes. I am writing to oppose the proposed idea of stretch codes based on both a lack of legitimate benefit as well as serious implementation concerns.

In Connecticut we have a highly competent committee of industry professionals (Architects, Engineers, Building Inspectors, Environmental Experts, Fire Marshalls, a Builder, and Mechanical contractors) who are code and residential construction EXPERTS. It is our State's Codes and Standards Committee. They spend thousands of hours reviewing each new version of National Codes and constant proposed changes. The result are balanced and thorough recommendations of updated versions of Building Codes for adoption by our Connecticut state legislature.

Reasons Stretch Codes are not needed:

Each new version that the Codes and Standards Committee recommend pushes the envelope for energy efficiency and sustainability. Current building code is significantly more energy efficient than even 5 or 10 years ago. This steady march to extremely low energy use and sustainable homes will continue regardless of Stretch Codes. In fact, new adopted code versions will soon surpass anything that DEEP would write into a current stretch code today.

All architects and Builders of new homes have the choice to go as energy efficient and sustainable as they would like. The State Building Code is just a minimum requirement for health safety and welfare of a homeowner and the community. Builders, Architects and Homeowners are often pushing the limits and advancing the cause of Energy Efficiency in new home construction. Allowing DEEP with municipal adoption to require higher codes is an ideological pursuit that should be the decision of the owner. It is not a health and safety objective.

Serious Concerns on Stretch Codes:

In contrast to the highly successful balanced approach of the Codes and Standards Committee, the proposed bill puts the stretch codes in just the hands of possibly ideological DEEP staffers. There is no team of architects, engineers, HVAC expert companies, Building Science Professionals or hands on building professionals. Do we want to put our code process and home construction future in the hands one or two DEEP managers who could guide and create a stretch code without Public Hearings and



balanced voices from all sides? That would be hijacking the fully vetted and successful current procedure.

In Connecticut we have a very small state with 169 towns. I cannot stress the benefit and importance of a consistent Building Code across the State in all 169 municipalities. Our current Statutes **prohibit** municipalities from adopting differing codes for this very reason. We are geographically too intermixed to handle differing laws (codes) from town to town. And what starts as one optional code today will surely be many varying stretch or optional codes in the future.

Our State building codes will continue to adapt and change as technology changes. This will continue whether we pass "stretch codes" in Connecticut or not. In addition, a very successful state and national Energy Star program is leading the way in advances in energy efficiency. Many builders, engineers and architects choose to exceed code requirements voluntarily due to Energy Star incentives, but only when it is appropriate for the project.

Our national building code committees, and Energy Star spend tens of millions of dollars testing the different code concepts for energy efficiency details and sustainability details in the different climates around the country. That research tests and verifies the code requirements they ultimately adopt. The codes and standards need to work as intended without causing other building science problems. Often good ideas have unintended consequences like mold growth inside wall systems or poorer indoor air quality. If DEEP can now write codes, will DEEP need to hire more engineers to test and vet their "stretch codes" like our national code system does?

Will Connecticut be opening the door to crumbling concrete type liability concerns from Stretch Codes pushing owners and builders into performance requirements and details with unintended consequences?

I as a building professional strongly advise against circumventing our already advancing code improvement process.



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