

Testimony from Brian M. Daniels, Executive Director
H 5278 – Relating to State Affairs and Government – Energy Facility Siting Act
House Committee on Environment & Natural Resources– March 4, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to share the League's thoughts on H 5278. A few years ago, I served on the Energy Facility Siting Study Commission, which heard numerous ideas about how to reform the current energy siting process. Since then, a stakeholder group has continued to meet to explore legislative improvements, many of which are incorporated in H 5278. The League appreciates that collaborative approach.

During the study commission's hearings, we heard from Burrillville and other communities about the challenges they faced during the application and siting processes of major energy projects in recent years. While energy facilities can have statewide impacts on energy rates and environmental goals – and require the input and oversight of state agencies – we cannot forget that these facilities also have local impacts. In many cases, those local impacts can be managed or mitigated, but they must be fully understood as part of the siting and approval process. H 5278 provides several opportunities for cities and towns to be heard in the energy siting process for major generating facilities, including:

- A pre-filing requirement that applicants consult with municipalities to discuss the local review processes;
- A more thorough application, including information about required compliance with all local permits and licenses;
- At least three public meetings in the host community, and
- The ability for municipal agencies to submit advisory opinions on local impact, as well as financial support from the applicant for the host community to conduct required impact studies and other related costs.

We recognize that energy projects have statewide impacts and require the feedback of many stakeholders. The League wants to make sure that host communities have a voice – not a veto – in these important decisions. Cities and towns believe the EFSB should understand and consider any local impacts on municipal finances and services when making an energy facility siting decision. We believe H 5278 includes many local protections and represents a substantial improvement over the status quo. We encourage the committee to support the bill, and we thank you for your consideration of our views.