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**Massachusetts Sierra Club**

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September 6, 2013

Chairman John D. Keenan  
Joint Committee on Public Health  
State House, Room 504  
Boston, MA 02133

Chairman Jeffrey Sanchez  
Joint Committee on Public Health  
State House, Room 130  
Boston, MA 02133

**Re: Testimony regarding H.2048 which proposes a commission to study the health impacts from wind turbines.**

Dear Chairman Keenan, Chairman Sanchez, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our comments on H.2048, a bill which would establish a commission to study the health impacts from wind turbines. First, the Sierra Club wishes to clarify its oral testimony before the Committee on July 9th, 2013 to highlight that, given the existence of MassDEP's Wind Turbine Noise Technical Advisory Group, we do not support H.2048, as it is unnecessary, redundant, and would delay further deployment of wind in the Commonwealth.

The Sierra Club maintains its longstanding and continued support for the development of both land-based and off-shore wind. We view wind as an essential renewable and clean energy resource to help wean Massachusetts from fossil fuels, reduce carbon pollution, localize the cost of energy, and avoid the worst impacts of climate change while also powering the state's transition to a thriving low-carbon economy. Furthermore, we applaud the efforts of Rep. Peake in seeking objective data in order to move forward with development of properly sited wind turbines. However, as noted, there are existing studies and a wealth of objective data that would accomplish this goal, as well as MassDEP's Wind Turbine Noise Technical Advisory Group and an established and fair regulatory process that already addresses the concerns that have been raised. The establishment of yet another study seeking additional data will have the unintentional, yet unfortunate effect of creating further avoidable delays.

The climate change crisis makes the transition to a low-carbon economy the defining challenge of our age. We need to embrace and promote energy efficiency and renewable energy resources and reduce our reliance on coal, natural gas, oil, other fossil fuels, and industrial-scale biomass. This transition is an opportunity to develop new technologies for a renewable energy powered industry and a source of new jobs for Massachusetts. And it is a way to keep our energy dollars in the state rather than exporting them to buy fossil fuels. A failure to reduce our carbon emissions will bring about climate disruptions that will make us regret not seizing every opportunity today to displace those fuels.

With that said, the Sierra Club only supports wind developments, or any developments for that matter, which are appropriately sited and permitted. In 2012, the Department of Environmental Protection convened an independent expert panel of medical doctors and PhDs to examine extensively the existing scientific literature on a variety of impacts which were being attributed, whether accurately or not, to wind turbines. Their study concluded that there are impacts, such as shadow flicker, noise, vibration, ice throw, and general annoyance, which can be adequately prevented, minimized and/or mitigated through the application of best practices within the siting and permitting process.<sup>1</sup>

Given the attention which land-based wind has received in the Commonwealth in recent years, we fully expect the recommended best practices regarding turbine siting to become the norm for towns pursuing wind projects. In support of this expectation, the Mass DEP announced on July 23, 2013 the formation of a technical advisory group to steer the agency's policy with regard to wind turbine noise regulations. "The 16-member technical advisory group includes acousticians, public health professionals, representatives of the wind industry and a neighbor to the Falmouth wind turbines. The group will consider changes to Mass DEP noise regulations and policy as they relate (specifically) to wind turbines."<sup>2</sup>

Potential wind impacts, rather than being ignored, are being proactively addressed so that Massachusetts can quickly and responsibly realize its clean energy potential. To this end, we oppose any effort which would unnecessarily slow the progress of wind development. The Sierra Club's Massachusetts Chapter views wind energy as creating new jobs, growing our economy and reducing climate destabilizing carbon pollution. Many municipalities across the state are already seeing the benefits of reduced electricity bills and reduced pollution from this abundant natural resource.<sup>3</sup>

If the previous decade's progress toward better health, a cleaner environment and greater self-sufficiency is any indication, Massachusetts has a bright future as a leader of the clean energy revolution, and our success will rely heavily on our ability to harness the wind's power. We should move forward with appropriate turbine siting, guided by the most up-to-date scientific evidence regarding impact prevention and mitigation. Mass DEP's convening of the aforementioned Technical Advisory Group demonstrates a firm commitment by the state to "seek a policy and regulations for wind turbine noise that encourage appropriate wind development, provides regulatory clarity for developers, towns and communities, and are protective of public health and the environment."<sup>4</sup>

The Sierra Club has long been committed to promoting positive solutions to reduce adverse environmental impacts of human activity. Enacting H.2048 would place unneeded obstacles in front of any land-based wind projects, regardless of local sentiments and conditions, while prolonging Commonwealth residents' dependence on fossil fuels for electricity generation and perpetuating the real and adverse health impacts of associated emissions. In light of these realities, we ask that the Committee give H.2048 an unfavorable report.

Respectfully,



Ryan Black  
Director, Massachusetts Sierra Club

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<sup>1</sup> [www.mass.gov/dep/energy/wind/turbine\\_impact\\_study.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/dep/energy/wind/turbine_impact_study.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/news/advisory-committees/wntag.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.engineering.com/ElectronicsDesign/ElectronicsDesignArticles/ArticleID/6125/A-Town-Saves-Money-with-Renewable-Energy.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cbuiding.org/project/massdep-wind-turbine-and-noise-technical-advisory-group>