

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Griffin Roberge 271-2878

SB 126, relative to eligibility of hospitals with renewable energy projects for funds from the renewable energy fund.

Hearing Date: February 2, 2017.

Time Opened: 2:22 p.m.

Time Closed: 2:32 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Avar, Bradley, Innis, Fuller Clark and Feltes.

Members of the Committee Absent: None.

Bill Analysis: This bill requires the public utilities commission to award funds from the renewable energy fund to hospitals with renewable energy projects.

Sponsors:

Sen. Fuller Clark

Rep. Shepardson

Rep. Cali-Pitts

Rep. Backus

Rep. Oxenham

Who supports the bill: Senator Martha Fuller Clark (District 21), Richard Parsons (North Country Health Care), Ashley Elinor (NH Audubon), Paula Minnehan (NH Hospital Association).

Who opposes the bill: Heidi Kroll (Monadnock Paper Mills).

Who is neutral on the bill: Anne Ross (PUC).

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Martha Fuller Clark

Senate District 21

- SB 126 would expand the opportunity for hospitals to apply for funds from the Renewable Energy Fund (REF).
- Lines 9 and 10 mention the commercial and industrial sectors, but not hospitals. Hospitals do not fall under that category.
- Hospitals are enormous consumers of energy. They should partner with the state to get grants that serve as incentives for them to reduce their energy costs.

Paula Minnehan

Vice President, State Government Relations, NH Hospital Association (NHHA)

- The NHHA supports SB 126.
- NH hospitals have been considering a number of different energy options. Having access to funds through the REF would allow them to reduce costs.
- Some examples of ways NH hospitals are investing in renewable energy projects include wood chip burning plants.
- Less energy creates less pollution and helps lessen costs.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: N/A.

Neutral Information Presented:

Anne Ross

Counsel, Public Utilities Commission (PUC)

- Mr. Ross was asked to approach by Senator Bradley.
- The PUC administers the REF.
- Senator Bradley was surprised that hospitals are not included, given they are in the higher category in producing energy in the state. Ms. Ross stated hospitals are eligible and that they can apply for grants from the REF.
- The application for funds is based on the meter, not the type of business conducted. They do not exclude a non-profit because it is a non-profit. If it has a commercial meter, it is eligible to apply for grants.
- Senator Bradley said the bill is not necessary, but it does no harm since hospitals are included anyway. By singling out hospitals as one facet, Senator Bradley was concerned it would open up an opportunity for others to come through and claim they do not have access to the REF. Ms. Ross said she does not understand the intention of SB 126. The PUC is willing to talk with the concerned hospitals. Ms. Ross stated that by addressing the problem through legislation would confuse the allocation process.
- Senator Bradley said it does not appear as if the sponsor's intention is to carve out an exclusive status for hospitals. Senator Fuller Clark said that was correct.
- Senator Bradley mentioned a similar effort made for a church in his district. Senator Bradley was concerned about creating a type of precedent if the bill was passed. Ms. Ross said that anytime a group is called out and there is no purpose statement or legislative history, that it then creates future arguments for other groups to be called out.

Future Action: Pending

GJR

Date Hearing Report completed: February 2, 2017