

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony
Senate Bill 950 and Senate Bill 952 (Section 10)
Energy and Technology Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
March 4, 2021

Co-Chairs Needleman and Arconti, Vice-Chairs Winfield and Allie-Brennan, Ranking Members Formica and Ferraro, and members of the Energy & Technology Committee:

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) is the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its ~130 land trusts. We advocate for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and work to ensure the long-term strength and viability of land conservation in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in opposition to **SB 950: An Act Concerning The Replacement Of Public Utility Poles And Revising Vegetation Management In Utility Protection Zones** and **SB 952: An Act Concerning Certain Solar Energy Projects (Section 10 only)**.

Both bills include proposals which are contrary to the recommendations set forth in the [Governor's Council on Climate Change \(GC3\) Phase 1 Report: Near-Term Actions January 2021](#) (GC3 Report).

SB 950: CLCC opposes SB 950 which is overly broad, giving the EDC discretion to take down trees without conferring with the municipal tree warden or providing notice to the owner of the impacted property. Recognizing the value of trees in helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change through absorption of carbon, and in removing pollution and particulate matter from the air, The GC3 Report recommends *inter alia* protecting urban forests and planting more trees as part of a No-Net-Loss of Forest Policy (recommendation 26, page 40). The changes proposed by SB 950 run contrary to this recommendation by allowing Electric Distribution Companies to unnecessarily circumvent the regular public notice and permitting process for certain tree pruning and removals, i.e. making it easier to take down trees at a time when we are seeking to protect them as much as possible.

SB 952 (Section 10): CLCC opposes SB 952, Section 10 which requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to create an expedited permitting process for solar energy systems sited on farmland. With respect to the siting of solar projects, The GC3 Report recommends the state "evaluate approaches and best practices for siting of renewable and non-renewable energy infrastructure to avoid loss of forests, farmland and other sensitive lands (recommendation 25, page 40) and to disincentivize location of solar projects on farmland (recommendation 41 c., page 45). By requiring an expedited permitting process for solar energy systems, Section 10 runs contrary to these recommendations, thereby setting the state back in meeting its GC3 goals.

On behalf of CLCC, I thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

