

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony Senate Bill No. 10 and House Bill No. 5116
Energy and Technology Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
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Co-Chairs Needleman and Arconti, Vice-Chairs Winfield and Allie-Brennan, Ranking Members Formica and Ferraro, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in support of **S.B. No. 10, An Act Concerning Climate Change Mitigation (SB 10)**, and **H.B. No. 5116, An Act Requiring The Creation Of Utility Company Tree-Planting Funds (HB 5116)** as they relate to CLCC's 2022 Conservation Priorities.

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) is the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community. We advocate for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and work to ensure the long-term strength and viability of land conservation in Connecticut. As a coalition organization, CLCC works with Connecticut's robust land trust community (~130 -- the third most in the country), as well as municipalities, councils of government, regional conservation partnerships, and other entities committed to land conservation and addressing climate change at the local level. CLCC was a member of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) Forests Sub-Group, a dedicated attendee at the meetings of the GC3 Equity and Environmental Justice Working Group, among others, as well as a member of the Policy on Resilient Forests for Connecticut's Future (PRFCT Forest) Working Group.

CLCC supports SB 10 which adds a statutory mandate to reduce the level of emissions of greenhouse gas from electricity supplied to electric customers in the state to zero percent by 2040. The *GC3 Phase 1 Report: Near-Term Actions* (January 2021) as well as *Governor's Executive Order No. 21-3* (December 2021) underscore the need for state policy to address the overlapping impacts that climate change continues to have on our most vulnerable communities, our environment, and our public health. Tackling these impacts and reaching the state's ambitious goals for greenhouse gas reduction requires an immediate and multi-faceted approach.

CLCC respectfully urges an aggressive investment by the state in programs that support forestland and wetlands protection, tree planting and other nature-based climate solutions as well as the inclusion of a requirement for monitoring and reporting on the negative emissions generated by working and natural lands, as part of a comprehensive strategy in meeting the emission targets set forth under the Global Warming Solutions Act.

CLCC supports HB 5116, in concept, which requires utility companies to create and administer a fund that distributes money to municipalities for tree-planting projects in public areas. As alluded to above, it is well documented that our state's natural areas, including forests and trees, are among our strongest defenses against the impacts of climate change. Trees have a local cooling effect (which is especially important in urban areas), act as natural filters in protecting air quality, and absorb and store carbon and other harmful greenhouse gas emissions. With a heightened awareness as to these and many other environmental, social, and economic



benefits that trees and forests provide, there has been an outpouring of public concern over tree-cutting and other vegetative management activities undertaken by utility companies in communities across the state.

HB 5116 is a step in the right direction in establishing a mechanism to compensate communities for the loss of trees and other vegetation as result of utility actions. However, as pointed out in the testimony of Eric Hammerling on behalf of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA), we respectfully contend that the bill does not go far enough in terms of the amount of compensation, and is too restrictive with respect to where replantings may occur and the time period in which the awards may be made. CLCC concurs with CFPA's comments and would be happy to work with the committee on adopting a more comprehensive program of compensatory reforestation and mitigation for utility and state agency actions.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments, and for all you do. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.