

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

General Comments on House Bill No. 6725
Environment Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
February 27, 2023

Co-Chairs Lopes and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Hochadel and Palm, Ranking Members Harding and Callahan, and members of the Environment 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 Connecticut's land conservation community.

Thank you for this opportunity to present comments related to **House Bill No. 6725, An Act Revising Certain Farming and Aquaculture Programs of the Department of Agriculture.**

CLCC generally supports the provisions of HB 6725, including updating the CT Farmland Restoration and Climate Resiliency Grant Program to remove the \$20,000 cap on developing, implementing and complying with a farm resources management plan or a farmland restoration and climate resiliency plan as set forth in Section 1(b).

We offer the following comments regarding a few sections of concern as raised in testimony of the Working Lands Alliance presented by Chelsea Gazillo, its program director:

Section 1. We recommend removing the word "federal" from the language in Section 1 which would limit the combination of state and federal funds to 90% of a project cost. This cap may have the effect of penalizing farmers who are able to leverage federal matching funds to help fully fund a project.

Section 5. In light of significant questions raised by members of the agricultural community, we suggest that further study is warranted before amending the statute to allow for future subdivision of agricultural conservation easements. Issues to be addressed include the circumstances under which the provision would be permitted, the impacts on appraisals and easement enforcement, benefits to current and future landowners, and the administrative efficiencies realized by the agency.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our input. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

