CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony on House Bill No. 5294
Environment Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
March 14, 2022

Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, 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 testimony in support of **House Bill No. 5294, An Act Concerning the Intentional Release of Certain Balloons** which would prohibit the intentional release of certain helium balloons that become a source of litter in the landscape and waterways of the state.

Land conservation is as much about the perpetual care of the habitats and other conservation values of the land as it is about securing the legal protection of the property to begin with. Land stewardship is a huge responsibility of land trust and community park and open space volunteers and staff. Their daily work includes everything from implementing management plans, building and maintaining trails, battling invasives, monitoring for violations of conservation easements, encroachments and other illegal activity, to picking up trash.

By prohibiting the release of certain helium balloons, HB 5294 would help to keep community and state preserves, parks and other open spaces free of debris that are unsightly and harmful to the quality of our land and water. Helium balloons pose a threat to birds, fish and other wildlife through ingestion and entanglement. CLCC supports HB 5294 which will help to support stewardship of conservation lands and waters and protect wildlife and their habitats throughout the state.

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.