

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony on House Bill No. 6397
Environment Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
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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 testimony regarding **House Bill No. 6397, An Act Concerning Zero Carbon Emissions.**

As a coalition organization, CLCC works with Connecticut's robust land trust community as well as DEEP, municipalities, and other entities committed to land conservation and addressing climate change at every level. CLCC was a member of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) Forests Sub-Group, a member of the Policy on Resilient Forests for Connecticut's Future (PRFCT Future) Working Group, and most recently, a participant in the GC3 Resilient Infrastructure and Nature-based Solutions Working Group.

CLCC supports HB 6397 which declares climate change as a public health and environmental justice emergency and creates policies and accountability for reaching the state's goals for zero-carbon emissions. The bill delineates mandatory agency actions which, *inter alia*, underscore the urgency in securing federal funds and in enacting legislation that helps to address the multitude of adverse impacts of the changing climate on all communities.

What the bill fails to include, however, are specific actions related to climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation, and any recognition of the essential role that nature-based climate solutions play in meeting the state's targets for carbon neutrality.

The *GC3 Phase 1 Report: Near-Term Actions* (January 2021), *Governor's Executive Order No. 21-3* (December 2021), as well as a multitude of GC3 Natural and Working Lands (WNL) Working Group reports ('collectively "GC3 Recommendations"') 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.

To that end, the GC3 Recommendations recognize that our state's forestlands, wetlands, other natural areas, and working lands are among our strongest defenses against the impacts of climate change. The benefits of these nature-based climate solutions to public health, the economy, and environment include, but are not limited to, protecting biodiversity, reducing the risks and impacts of flooding, filtering pollutants from the air and water, and absorbing and storing carbon. It is essential that these benefits are considered at every level of planning and



management of our state's natural resources, including as part of a comprehensive strategy in addressing the climate crisis.

CT DEEP has taken an important step forward in recognizing the value of nature-based solutions in the state's overall climate response through the agency's proposed amendments to the Global Warming Solutions Act. (See [DEEP Legislative Proposals](#), page 70 et seq., "An Act Concerning Greenhouse Gases", Page 70 et. seq.) These amendments would require monitoring and reporting on carbon sinks (a.k.a. negative emissions) provided by forests, soils, wetlands, and other WNL. This includes adding a definition of negative emissions and requiring the inclusion of negative emissions in the greenhouse gas inventory and the development of policies and regulations to increase negative emissions. We strongly support these proposed amendments which we contend are a necessary component of an overall strategy in meeting the state's required greenhouse gas reduction targets.

In addition to the foregoing, the GC3 Recommendations include many actions to ensure that WNL are included in the state's climate change strategies for mitigation, resilience, and adaptation. These recommendations range from increasing investments in protection of WNL to identifying and adopting a system of data collection, monitoring, and reporting that quantifies the value of ecosystem services provided by WNL. (See GC3 Working and Natural Lands Working Group memos appended to the testimony of Denise Savageau, Chair, CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation)

We respectfully ask the Committee to ensure that HB 6397 appropriately includes mitigation, resilience and adaptation action items, and recognizes WNL as an essential part of the state's climate change planning and response strategy. I welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee to address some of the foregoing comments.

Thank you for raising this important bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.