

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony
House Bill 6496 and House Bill 6502
Environment Committee
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Co-Chairs Cohen and Borer, Vice-Chairs Slap and Gresko, 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 land conservation in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in support of **HB 6496 An Act Concerning Certain Soil-related Initiatives (Sections 2-5 only)** and **HB 6502 An Act Concerning The Use Of Certain Polystyrene Products, The Availability Of Single-use Straws, The Release Of Certain Balloons And The Compostable Nature Of Single-use Produce Bags.**

HB 6496: CLCC supports Sections 2-5 of the bill, which add "soil health" to various sections of the Connecticut General Statutes. Section 2 adds soil health to the Department and Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner's scope of duties and oversight (Section 22a - 5). Sections 3 and 4 serve to update the Soil Conservation Title (Section 22a-314 *et seq.*) Section 5 includes soil health in the Erosion and Sediment Control Act (Section 22a-328).

Soils and other natural climate solutions (forests, wetlands, grasslands, etc.) protect biodiversity and absorb and store carbon. The statutory changes proposed by HB 6496 Sections 2-5 help to recognize the importance of healthy soils to our environment and the state's efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. CLCC does not have a position on Sections 1 or 6 of the bill.

HB 6502: 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 management and 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 the easements, encroachments and other illegal activity, to picking up trash.

Reducing plastic and polystyrene, will help in the constant battle to keep our 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 6502 which will help to support stewardship and management of conservation lands and protection of wildlife and their habitat throughout the state.

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.

