

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 301
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 testimony in strong support of **Senate Bill No. 301, An Act Requiring the Provision of All-Terrain Wheelchairs at State Parks** which would establish a pilot program by which DEEP provides all-terrain wheelchairs for use by the public at certain state parks and campgrounds.

All-terrain wheelchairs ensure that every wheelchair user or others with mobility challenges can explore the outdoors with little to no restriction. South Dakota, Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota and Georgia offer all-terrain wheelchairs to those with physical limitations. Connecticut has an opportunity to join these states as a leader in accessibility to ensure as many people as possible receive the benefits of nature and the outdoors.

As with all new responsibilities for DEEP, we recognize that in addition to the investment in the equipment - proposed for funding in the Governor's Budget for FY 2024-25 (HB 6659, T 1416) - the agency will need support to comply with the bill's reporting requirements, as well as to implement all elements of the program, including maintenance, storage, reservation system, etc., in order for it to be successful.

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

