

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 979
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.

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.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony in support of **Section 7 of Senate Bill No. 979, An Act Promoting Energy Affordability, Energy Efficiency and Green Cities.**

CLCC strongly supports Section 7 of the bill which would establish a goal for Connecticut of increasing forest cover by 5% in environmental justice communities by 2040. Consistent with recommendations from the GC3 Phase I Report, PRFCT Future Working Group Report and others, this proposal is supported by the Governor's Budget for FY 2024 - 25 (HB 6659), which includes an allocation of \$500,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars for "Climate Equity Urban Forestry" (T1417).

Investments in tree planting and urban forestry will build upon DEEP grant programs that seek to address the significant inequities not only in where trees and greenspaces are located, but also in the associated health inequities for people living in our urban areas with the highest poverty rates. Heat-related stress coupled with poor urban air quality can pose major health risks to vulnerable groups, particularly those with preexisting health conditions. Urban trees and forests can improve air and water quality, mitigate the heat island effect, reduce flooding, shield people from ultraviolet radiation and mitigate against other negative effects of the changing climate.

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

