

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 12 Section 11
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
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Co-Chairs Fonfara and Scanlon, Vice-Chairs Miller, Moore, Kavros and Meskers, Ranking Members Martin and Cheeseman, and distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding 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 the land conservation community in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony in support of **Senate Bill No. 12, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Matching Funds and Extending the Time Period for Distributing Grants for Certain Law Enforcement Equipment**, specifically Section 11 related to bonding for State Parks infrastructure.

Connecticut is home to 110 State Parks and 32 State Forests, comprising over 255,000 acres across the state. Operating under DEEP's oversight, Connecticut's public lands welcome over 10 million visitors annually. During the COVID-19 pandemic that number increased significantly – approximately 13 million in 2021 – as people turned to the outdoors as a source of solace and safe refuge. In addition to providing public health and environmental benefits, Connecticut's State Parks are also economic drivers – generating over \$3.3 billion in revenue and helping to sustain 41,721 jobs in 2020. (National Bureau of Economic Analysis - 2020 Report)

While these numbers are extremely encouraging for the state's quality of life and the strength of its economy, they also underscore the critical need to address a backlog of facility maintenance, repairs, and other essential infrastructure projects at Connecticut's State Parks, which DEEP has estimated at a cost of \$130 million.

The increased bond investment of \$15 million for State Parks infrastructure as proposed by Section 11 of SB 12 would be a step forward in addressing this backlog and ensuring that these amenities are safe and accessible for all to enjoy.

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.

