

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony
Raised Bill No. 6577 Section 1 (f)
Government Administration and Elections Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
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Co-Chairs Flexer and Fox, Vice-Chairs Haskell and Thomas, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in opposition to Section 1 (f) of Raised Bill **6577**, **An Act Concerning State Properties Review Board. (HB 6577)**

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.

CLCC opposes Section 1 (f) of HB 6577 which would extend the authority of the State Property Review Board's (SPRB) to review real estate transactions of several state agencies, including the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). In the context of our land conservation mission, CLCC is especially concerned about Section 1 (f) (4), which extends SPRB review to any purchase of development rights under the DoAg Community Farms Preservation Program (CFPP); and Section 1 (f) (5) which authorizes SPRB review of any real estate acquisition by any other state agency that is paid for with bonds, which would include DEEP's Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program (RNHT) and possibly the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA).

The DoAg CFPP was created in 2008 to preserve small farms of local economic importance and to increase local capacity of towns to plan for, and participate in, farmland preservation efforts. Established by statute in 1986, the RNHT is DEEP's primary program for acquiring land to expand the state's system of parks, forests, wildlife, and other natural open spaces. Since 1998, OSWA has provided matching grants to municipalities, land trusts and water companies to acquire land for passive recreation, natural resource protection, fish and wildlife habitat, and to protect critical watershed lands.

All three programs are already subject to extensive scrutiny. Due diligence to ensure these transactions meet legal, financial and organizational best practices include extensive review of appraisals, contracts and other legal documents (including by the office of the Attorney General), title search and survey results, baseline documentation, and other elements of the transaction.

At a time when the state is seeking to ramp up the pace, quality and scale of its land conservation and farmland preservation efforts -- not to mention increasing transparency and responsiveness and streamlining of processes¹ -- it makes no sense to add an unnecessary and duplicative layer of administration and review to these critical and well-established programs. We strongly urge the committee to remove Section 1 (f) of HB 6577.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ [See DEEP 20By20 Initiative](#)

