

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony Raised Senate Bill No. 252
Government Administration and Elections Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
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Co-Chairs McLachlan, Flexer, and Fox, Ranking Member Devlin, 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 (CLCC) in opposition to **Raised Senate Bill 252: An Act Requiring the Sale of the Former Seaside Regional Center.** (S.B.252)

As the State's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its 137+ land trusts, CLCC advocates for land conservation, stewardship, and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the land conservation community in Connecticut.

S.B. 252 would require the state to sell 34-acres of public land located on Long Island Sound in Waterford. In 2014, the Governor designated the property as Seaside State Park. Since that time, DEEP has gone through an extensive planning process for the site as part of the Connecticut State Park system, including soliciting public input and developing a Master Plan for Seaside State Park.

Released in January 2018 as part of the Record of Decision, the Master Plan includes detailed findings related to the ecological, cultural, and archaeological resources on the site and sets forth several alternatives for use of the property. The preferred alternative as a Destination Park contemplates a public-private partnership to, *inter alia*, "enable the adaptive reuse and restoration of the historic buildings on site, enhancement of the site for ecological and recreational purposes", and, as a State Park, provide assurance of continued public access to Long Island Sound. With this comprehensive plan now available, any mandate to divest the state of this valuable public asset is at best premature and undermines the investment of time and resources by the agency and the public into the development of the Master Plan.

This land belongs to all of us. There is an expectation that public land, like our State Parks -- intended to be preserved to safeguard the quality of our state's water resources and for conservation and recreational purposes -- will be protected as such *in perpetuity* to the greatest extent possible. Conveying these public assets, particularly for the benefit of private and/or for economic purposes, sets a troubling precedent for further erosion of the public trust in the state to protect such land.

We respectfully contend that more time and scrutiny of any proposed divestiture of this property is necessary before we lose this valuable and irreplaceable resource forever. Please oppose S.B. 252.

On behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, I thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

