

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony on House Bill No. 6648
Planning and Development Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
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Co-Chairs Kavros DeGraw and Rahman, Vice-Chairs Chafee and Needleman, Ranking Members Zullo and Fazio, and members of the Planning and Development 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 support of **House Bill No. 6648, An Act Concerning the Online Recording, Indexing and Searching of Municipal Land Records and Maps**. CLCC strongly supports this bill which would require the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management to: (1) establish a commission for the online recording, indexing and searching of municipal land records and maps, and (2) create and maintain an online database for the recording, indexing and searching of municipal land records and maps.

The state has mandated a goal of conserving 21% of its land area as open space. (CGS Section 23-8(b)) Of that, 10% is to be conserved by the state and 11% by conservation partners (land trusts, municipalities and water companies.) However, as observed by the CT Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), “[u]nfortunately, the exact amount of land held by DEEP’s conservation partners is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine. Land trusts are continuously acquiring properties for conservation and outdoor recreation, the inventory of municipal land is incomplete, it is very difficult to track easements, and there is no centralized accounting of privately preserved lands.” (See, [CEQ 2021 Annual Report, Section on Preserved Lands](#))

Pursuant to Public Act 14-169 (CGS Section 23-8(e)), DEEP established a publicly accessible geographic information map system and database that contains a public use and benefit land registry for state, municipal and private conservation lands. The registry is required to be updated quarterly. According to CEQ, however, “[t]o date, DEEP has only added about 26,000 acres or roughly 10 percent of the state-owned open space land into the registry. No progress on the land registry was completed in 2021, nor since September 2018.” (*Id.*)

Currently, DEEP collects data on a town-by-town basis through the Protected Open Space Mapping (POSM) project. The data does not include every town and is outdated the minute the researcher leaves the land records. It is time for Connecticut to modernize its system of data collection that would allow for ongoing, accessible, up-to-date tracking of land conservation progress in Connecticut and provide a basis for land use planning at the regional and statewide levels.

HB6648 would enable a holistic review and evaluation of the state’s current system of municipal data collection and provide a much needed opportunity to create a single-source, statewide database of information about public and private land ownership in Connecticut.

Thank you for raising this bill and for all you do. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

