

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Comments on House Bill No. 6381
Planning and Development Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
For public hearing on February 3, 2025

Co-Chairs Kavros DeGraw and Rahman, Vice-Chairs Chafee and Needleman, Ranking Members Zullo and Gordon, 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 ~117 land trusts. CLCC is a 501(c)(3) organization operating statewide. Our mission is to elevate and strengthen land conservation in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments regarding **House Bill No. 6381, An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Communities.**

CLCC's goals are to safeguard our natural and working lands, prioritize the vital role of nature-based solutions in mitigating the escalating effects of the interrelated crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and ensure that everyone everywhere has access to the benefits of nature. We also believe in the power of collaboration in addressing broader community needs, including working regionally and bringing together land trusts and other community groups to explore ways to increase cooperation, advocate for mutually beneficial policies, and create new opportunities for projects that include both conservation and affordable housing,

Through that lens, CLCC offers the following comments concerning HB6381:

Section 1(a)(1) of the bill includes a reference to CGS 7-131d-k, which authorizes the Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA). OSWA is the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's matching grant program for land trusts and municipalities to acquire land for open space and for water companies to acquire land to be classified as Class I or Class II water supply property. The program does not provide financial assistance for municipal sewer projects.

Even with the qualifying language ("to the extent said sections provide financial assistance for municipal sewer projects"), including CGS 7-131d-k in the bill is confusing. It raises concerns that funds may be diverted from this critical source of local land conservation support, undermining the bill's overall laudable aim to reduce sprawl, uphold community environmental standards, and foster collaboration in land use planning.

We therefore ask the Committee to remove the reference to CGS 7-131d-k from the bill.

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.

