

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony
S.B. No. 99 and H.B. No. 5103
Environment Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
February 21, 2020

Co-Chairs Cohen and Demicco, Vice-Chairs Kushner and Gresko, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in support of the following bills: **Raised S.B. 99 An Act Concerning The Use And Distribution Of Polystyrene Products**; and **H.B. 5103 An Act Requiring An Evaluation Of The State's Environmental Justice Law**.

As the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its 137+/- land trusts, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (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.

Raised S.B. 99 An Act Concerning The Use And Distribution Of Polystyrene Products: At first glance, it would appear that commenting on a bill concerning polystyrene products is outside the scope of CLCC's land conservation mission. However, successful land conservation is as much about the perpetual care of the habitats and other conservation values of the land as it is about securing the legal protection of the land to begin with. At every level, both public and private, we need to continue to do whatever we can to ensure continued quality and active stewardship and management of conservation lands throughout the state. With the majority of Connecticut's land trusts operating on the backs of volunteers -- and municipalities hampered by budgetary constraints -- this is no easy task. Reducing the use and distribution of polystyrene in our state will help in the constant battle to keep our preserves, parks, and other open spaces free of debris that are unsightly and harmful to the quality of our land and water.

H.B. 5103 An Act Requiring An Evaluation Of The State's Environmental Justice Law:

There are over 130 land trusts in Connecticut – the third most per state in the country. As independent, community-supported nonprofits, land trusts have differing areas of conservation focus and regional scope. They work in a wide variety of communities and landscapes, including urban, suburban, and rural areas, creating healthier environments through, *inter alia*, the protection of natural areas, forests, and farmland, and the development of parks, community gardens, urban forests, and other greenspaces. Consistent with this mission, addressing environmental justice issues is an important part of the struggle to improve and maintain a clean and healthy environment, while also addressing social inequities. We support HB 5103 which would strengthen the requirements under the state's existing environmental justice law (C.G.S Section 22a-20a) to provide better opportunity for public participation and greater protections for environmental justice communities.

We thank the committee for your consideration and for this opportunity to submit comments. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

