

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony
House Bill Nos. 5477 and 5476
Planning and Development Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
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Co-Chairs Cassano and McCarthy Vahey, Vice-Chairs Baker and Needleman, Ranking Members Champagne and Zawistowski, and members of the Planning and Development Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in support of **House Bill No. 5477, An Act Establishing a Tax Abatement for Certain Conservation Easements** and **House Bill No. 5476, An Act Establishing A State-Wide Geographic Information System Task Force**.

As the State's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its 130+ 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.

CLCC supports HB 5477: While many land trusts and municipalities have permission to establish trails on properties within state designated greenways, these agreements may not be permanent in nature. If passed, HB 5477 would enable, but not require, towns to waive property taxes along trail corridors of state-designated greenways for landowners who place a conservation easement on that portion of their property.

This new incentive would encourage landowners to protect trail corridors along state-designated greenways by donating a trail conservation easement to their local land trust, town, or the state. For land trusts working with landowners interested in protecting a trail corridor that is not currently designated as a greenway, HB 5477 provides further incentive to work with their community to apply to the state for greenway designation.

Developing trails to connect people to the land, each other, and their communities, is an essential role of land trusts throughout the state. This tax incentive will foster opportunities for collaboration between landowners, land trusts, and their communities to establish a more comprehensive and connective trail system. Trails and greenways provide opportunities for recreation and transportation, enhance property values, and bring tourists to our state and towns—not only enhancing our quality of life but also strengthening our local and state economies. They are well worth the investment.

CLCC supports HB 5476: Throughout the state, municipalities, land trusts, regional conservation partnerships, councils of government, and other entities are collecting Geographic Information System (GIS) data for identifying and prioritizing land for conservation, creating and promoting trails, connecting the public to conserved land, and other purposes. Compiling this data and creating a centralized, statewide GIS system will bring consistency and efficiency to the state's land use planning efforts. The creation of a Task Force to study the development of this important tool is a most welcome first step towards achieving this goal.

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

