

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 414
Transportation Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
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Co-Chairs Cohen and Berger-Girvalo, Vice-Chairs Lopes and Brown, Ranking Members Hwang and Kennedy, and members of the Transportation 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 present testimony in support of **Senate Bill No. 414, An Act Concerning Vegetation Management Guidelines by the Department of Transportation.**

CLCC appreciates the intent of SB 414 and supports efforts to ensure that state policies recognize the ecological and climate value of roadside vegetation. The bill would require the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation (DOT) to consider the carbon sequestration benefits of trees and other vegetation along highways and determine whether updates to vegetation management guidelines are warranted.

Roadside forests, trees, and vegetated corridors are often overlooked yet important parts of Connecticut's green infrastructure network. When managed thoughtfully, these landscapes can provide meaningful environmental and community benefits, including carbon sequestration and climate mitigation through trees and woody vegetation; stormwater management and flood mitigation, reducing runoff from impervious surfaces; wildlife habitat and ecological connectivity, particularly where transportation corridors intersect conserved lands; pollinator habitat that supports biodiversity and agricultural systems; and heat mitigation and improved air quality, especially in developed areas.

Considering these benefits in vegetation management planning is consistent with the growing recognition in state policy of nature-based solutions as a whole-of-government, cost-effective strategy for addressing climate change, improving resilience, enhancing biodiversity, and supporting community well-being.

We are fortunate to have the expertise on this issue from the University of Connecticut, Department of Natural Resources and the Environment (UConn), and support SB414's requirement that the results of the UConn report studying the carbon sequestration by trees and other vegetation along highways and other areas in the state be carefully considered by the Commissioner of Transportation in setting DOT guidelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your leadership on these important issues. I would be happy to answer any questions.

