



**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment
Before the Public Health Committee**

In Opposition of H.B. No. 5903, AN ACT CONCERNING DRINKING WATER

Submitted by Curtis P. Johnson, Senior Attorney
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Connecticut Fund for the Environment ("CFE"), with a total membership of approximately 6,000 Connecticut members, uses law and science to defend Connecticut's air, land and water.

Connecticut boasts some of the highest quality drinking water in the nation and Connecticut lawmakers play an important role in keeping our drinking water clean and pure. Protected approximately 110,000 acres of water company lands across our state is one of the important reasons that two million of our citizens today enjoy clean and safe drinking water..

CFE also opposes the current wording of H.B. 5903, An Act Concerning Drinking Water, because it directs the Department to "study restrictions pertaining too the sale, lease, assignment or change in use of Class I and class II lands..." This could easily be interpreted as directing the Department to consider loosening the restrictions on Class I and II lands. These 110,000 acres of forested land were purchased by water companies for the sole purpose of providing a natural buffer to and to purify the water that flows into our reservoirs. The purification and protections these lands provide is one of the reasons we enjoy high quality drinking water here in Connecticut. This bill could be interpreted as directing the Department to consider relaxing the restrictions that have long protected these lands, and possibly to consider opening up our Class I and II lands to development and commercial mining proposals. Opening up these lands to mining and development would be a perversion of the public health purpose for which these lands were purchased.

CFE would support the bill if the language was changed to read, "The Commissioner of Public Health shall study increasing the protections afforded to class I and class II lands to assure that development is prevented on Class I land and to be certain that commercial mining is not allowed on either Class I or II lands

It would be very bad public policy to open up water company lands to commercial mining and development. These lands have been long held in the public trust for the purpose of purifying and protecting our reservoir water quality, and protecting our public health. Let's continue our proud legacy of protecting these lands.