

Connecticut Tree Protective Association, Inc.

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We Advance the Care of Connecticut's Trees



Governor's Bill #6375 – Testimony of Rita Smith

Members of the Government Administrations and Elections Committee:

Organized August 16, 1922

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I am Rita Smith, Executive Secretary of the Connecticut Tree Protective Association. I am here today to deliver a written letter from the Association regarding Bill #6375. The Association is opposed to the termination of the Tree Protection Examining Board, as would occur through the passage of this bill in its current form. As I give this letter over to you, I would also like to add a few comments in support of the Association's position.

The Connecticut Tree Protective Association is an educational association dedicated to advancing the care of Connecticut's trees. We currently have 791 members, of whom nearly 600 are licensed arborists – or, about 2/3's of the licensed arborists in the state.

Connecticut has a licensing process for arborists that is the model for the rest of the country. This is so largely because of the role that the Tree Protection Examining Board plays. The Board meets four times a year to test each candidate for the arborist license. Not only does the Board recommend those candidates who are qualified for licensing, it also advises DEP, the body that issues the license, on standards for testing – on what a prospective arborist needs to know.

If I could give a quick example of that last point. Tree work is often cited as one of the 3 most dangerous professions in the country – right up there with offshore fisheries and forest logging. Men and women do tree work because they love the work, and they love trees. In turn, we as an association and a profession have worked hard to reduce the risks for those engaged in tree care. In the world of tree care, arborists are the supervisors of the work, as well as the individuals who diagnose

tree problems and recommend solutions. So, the arborist's role in safety in tree care is critical.

Almost entirely through industry effort, standards have been established for safety in arboricultural tree work. These are voluntary industry standards, promoted by the arborist profession, not government regulations. Yet, these standards are so highly respected that OSHA is in the process of adopting them.

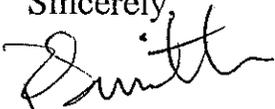
However, it may be years before OSHA adopts these standards. Regardless, these voluntary industry standards for safety in arboriculture are now a part of the testing process for the arborist license in Connecticut. Today, as a part of the licensing process, the men and women who would supervise tree care in Connecticut – those going for their arborist license – need to demonstrate to the Tree Protection Examining Board that they understand and are committed to safe working practices in the tree work that they would supervise.

This all has come about because of the job being done by a partnership that includes the profession, members of the general public and state government. This partnership is the Tree Protection Examining Board. Not only that, the Board does its job for virtually no cost to the state – perhaps \$500 a year in incidental expenses. The public and professional members of the Board volunteer their time.

Because of the Tree Protection Examining Board, not only are trees healthier and safer in Connecticut and tree care practices in the state more modern and up-to-date, but tree workers themselves are safer. This is a successful partnership. We respectfully ask that it not be eliminated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Rita Smith
Executive Secretary
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