



Testimony in Support of Bill 6504 (LCO No. 3677)

Presented by
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The Trust for Public Land
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Chairs and Members of the Commerce Committee:

On behalf of the Trust for Public Land, I would like to express support for Raised Bill No. 6504, An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Face of Connecticut Steering Committee. By way of introduction, the Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit land conservation organization that works in partnership with towns, other governmental agencies and land trusts to protect land as working farms, forestland, parks and open space. Our Connecticut office is located in New Haven and over the past 20 years we have protected over 5000 acres in more than 30 Connecticut communities.

The funds that are proposed by this bill will provide well needed support for programs that will enhance the health of our communities and of our environment. We thank you for your support of this important measure. However, while the bill provides the State Bond Commission with the power to authorize bonding to fund these new programs, which are so important to the Face of Connecticut campaign, it does not enable continued funding for existing programs.

The following land conservation and environmental protection programs have in recent years been funded as follows:

- \$10M to the Department of Agriculture for Farmland Preservation Program
- \$7.5M to the Department of Economic Development for Brownfields Remediation and Restoration Program
- \$7.5M to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Program
- \$7.5M to DEP for Natural Recreation and Heritage Program

These funding sources have become the backbone of land preservation in the State of Connecticut and we respectfully urge the Committee to amend this bill to include a provision that would ensure the maintenance of these existing funds. If there is any silver ("green") lining to these challenging economic times, it is that there has never been a better market, at least in recent years, to purchase land for conservation. Without a market for development, landowners are anxious to sell; and with land prices being at a record low, communities and land trusts are anxious to buy. However, without state funding to help finance these transactions, towns and land trusts will be unable to take advantage of these conservation opportunities. Conservation can't wait.

Consequently, the Trust for Public Land respectfully requests that the legislature amend this bill to provide for continued funding for existing programs that are critical to land conservation in the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.