



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

*In Support of H.B. No. 5264, AN ACT PROTECTING MUNICIPALLY ACQUIRED
OPEN SPACE LAND*

and

*Concerning H.B. No. 6371, AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION*

Submitted by Eric Annes, Legal Fellow
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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.*

CFE strongly urges the passage of H.B. No. 5264, An Act Protecting Municipally Acquired Open Space, in order to ensure that land purchased for the purposes of open space remain preserved for such purposes.

Preservation of open space is an important component of Connecticut's strategic development. Open space provides important opportunities for outdoor play, activity and environmental education. Preserving forested land is critical to the fight against global climate change by both removing carbon from the atmosphere and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Open space increases the scenic beauty of the state, contributes to the local sustainable economy and maintains the diversity of Connecticut's landscape. There are, of course, many other benefits of open space I have not mentioned that I need not bother to list as this legislature has long recognized these benefits.

Indeed, in section 23-8 this legislature established a statutory goal of preserving 21 percent of the state's land area as open space. As part of that statutory goal the state is to acquire ten percent of the state's land and the other 11 percent is to be held by municipalities, water companies, or non-profit land conservation organizations. This bill concerns the portion of land acquired by municipalities.

Municipalities often acquire land with the stated purpose of preserving the land as open space often without recording a conservation easement. Unfortunately, without a recorded easement, the land that was ostensibly purchased for the purpose of open space faces development pressure.

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It is true that the pressure to develop is sometimes for laudable projects such as schools or ball fields. But, it is precisely this reason that purchases of open space lands need the protection of easements. Once municipalities obtain ownership of land under the auspice of keeping open space, it is difficult to withstand the pressure to develop because of the expediency of using that land for latest initiative.

If the state truly wants to preserve open space, this bill is a necessity. Accordingly, CFE strongly supports H.B. 5264, An Act Protecting Municipally Acquired Open Space Land.

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Testimony Concerning H.B. No. 6371, AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

CFE strongly urges the Committee to hold the line on the current DEP budgets and not to allow any further cuts. A fully functioning Department of Environmental Protection is necessary to maintain Connecticut as a high quality area to work, raise a family and/or locate a business. Our competitive advantage comes not from a race to the bottom in terms of environmental regulation, but a race to the top in terms of places for people and businesses to locate. An adequately funded DEP is an essential part of a vision for Connecticut's future.

The hits that DEP has taken in the current budget are substantial. Moreover, the Connecticut DEP has traditionally been radically underfunded by the state, thus any further cuts could decimate its ability to act. Accordingly, we strongly urge that this committee hold the line on the current budget and reject any additional cuts to this chronically underfunded agency.