



Testimony in Support of Raised Bill 6660
(LCO No. 4534)

Presented by
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To: Chair and Members of the Committee on Environment:

On behalf of the Trust for Public Land, I would like to express support for Raised Bill No. 6660, **An Act Authorizing Bonds of the State for Various State Grant Programs and Concerning the Face of Connecticut Steering Committee**. This bill provides for funding and administration of programs that are critically important in sustaining land protection and smart growth initiatives in the State of Connecticut.

By way of introduction, The Trust of Public Land, a national non-profit organization, works in partnership with landowners, community groups and national, state and local agencies to protect land for public enjoyment. Our Connecticut office is located in New Haven and over the past 15 years we have protected more than 6000 acres in over 60 Connecticut communities.

The funds that are enabled by this bill will provide continued support for programs that enhance the health of our communities and of our environment. Funding through the Farmland Preservation Program, Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program and the Natural Recreation and Heritage Program have become the backbone of land preservation in the State of Connecticut.

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. We respectfully urge the Committee to support this bill in order to ensure the maintenance of these funds which are vital to land conservation in Connecticut.

This bill is also important because it affirms the establishment of the Face of Connecticut Steering Committee. During these challenging economic times, it is especially important to ensure that state programs and their funding sources are implemented and distributed in the most efficient manner possible. The Face of Connecticut Steering Committee has proven to be an effective administrator, successfully bringing multiple state departments and interests to the table to determine the best strategies for smart growth in Connecticut.

For the foregoing reasons, the Trust for Public Land respectfully urges the Committee to support Bill No. 6660 in order to ensure continued funding and administration of programs that have proven critically important to land conservation in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.

