

**To: The Honorable Edward Meyer, Senate Chair
The Honorable Richard Roy, House Chair
The Honorable Andrew Roraback, Senate Ranking
The Honorable Clark Chapin, House Ranking
Members of the Environment Committee**

From: Meghan Collins Fanning

Re: Environment Committee Public Hearing

**S.B. 831 (Proposed) AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL LIABILITY FOR
RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON CERTAIN OPEN SPACE LANDS.**

Date: January 31, 2011

As a West Hartford Resident, I am asking you to support *Senate Bill 831, An Act Concerning Municipal Liability for Recreational Activities on Certain Open Space Lands*. I moved to West Hartford in 2005 and since that time I have used the trails at both MDC reservoirs. I am an avid triathlete and I run and mountain bike on the paved loops, dirt roads, and single track trails. I also regularly hike with my family on the reservoir trails. I understand that the MDC is considering closing their facilities to recreational use to protect themselves from frivolous lawsuits.

Unfortunately, Connecticut municipalities are not protected by law from personal injury lawsuits involving public recreation. Municipalities should have the ability to promote outdoor physical activities and focus on providing recreational opportunities for residents rather than having to protect themselves from liability. In Connecticut, liability protection exists for private, corporate, and state landowners. Why doesn't this protection exist for municipalities? I encourage you to close the loopholes in the Recreational Use Act and provide consistent strong protection for municipal landowners.

While I truly appreciate the use of the MDC facilities, this is not just about the West Hartford Reservoir facilities. The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System currently totals over 800 miles of hiking trails in 88 Connecticut towns. Over 50 miles of Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System traverses municipal lands, including sections of the New England Trail. The New England Trail is the nation's newest national scenic trail, and also known as the Metacomet or Mattabesett Trail.

I cannot imagine losing the privilege of being able to hike, bike, and run on these trails. Please support this legislation and your municipalities.