CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony in Support of
SB834 (LCO No. 2356)
Submitted by
Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
January 31, 2011

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and Members of the Environment Committee:

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) strongly supports **SB No. 834, An Act Concerning Municipal Open Space Priorities and Funding for the Purchase of Such Properties.** CLCC is the voice for the Connecticut land conservation community and is appreciative of this opportunity to represent our members' interests here today. CLCC works with land trusts, town conservation and open space commissions, garden clubs and others to help ensure Connecticut's natural resources are protected forever. We provide training, technical assistance and funding to ensure the long term strength and viability of the land trust and conservation community across the state.

The Problem: Conservation and other green initiatives suffer when funded by local property taxes. For example, towns are often precluded from taking advantage of state and other open space grant programs because they are unable to come up with the requisite matching funds. Alternative local revenue is needed to leverage not only open space grants but also funding for smart growth, clean air and water projects, and energy conservation.

The Solution: This enabling legislation will allow municipalities to levy up to a 1% conveyance fee on purchasers of real estate to provide dedicated funding for conservation projects, brownfield remediation and other municipal environmental projects, such as storm sewer infrastructure, energy efficient renovations, alternative energy infrastructure, etc. – investments which serve to save municipal dollars in the long term. With a government focus on creating "green jobs", this proposal is among those with the greatest potential for funding green projects and smart growth initiatives throughout the state.

This proposal requires no fiscal note and does not impose a mandate upon municipalities to establish the program. If enacted, this legislation would enable communities to decide on their own, through the public approval process, whether they would like to take advantage of this mechanism for raising dedicated revenue. We respectfully urge the committee to provide towns with this choice by supporting this innovative and long overdue proposal.

SB 831 (LCO No. 2480), An Act Concerning Municipal Liability for Recreational Activities on Certain Open Space Lands. CLCC supports providing municipalities with the same protections from liability as private landowners which would serve to, *inter alia*: maintain recreational access to municipal lands; ensure consistent application and furtherance of policies - at every level of government - that encourage public recreation; and protect state investments of Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Program as well as other state grant and municipal funds used to protect open space.

SB 829 (LCO no. 2338), An Act Establishing an Open Space Registry. CLCC supports the creation of a centralized registry with reliable data about what lands are protected and where. Such a registry will promote good planning and policy making for conservation action, natural resource management and smart growth development at both the municipal and state level.

On behalf of the land trust and conservation community, I thank you for your attention and consideration.

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I strongly support the proposal to allow 10 Mill participants to transition to the PL 490 program. I live in Ledyard, CT , adjacent to forest land that has been in my family for over 300 years. We love the land as is and have no interest in development.

However, the prospective tax increases would create a huge financial burden which would likely would force my family to divest some or all of this property.

Thank you for your consideration.

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