

Mr. Bowsza,

I am an avid outdoorsman, hiker and bicyclist who backs this bill to protect municipalities from liability. I have been Mountain biking, bike riding and hiking/camping for 30 years. When I was a child the world was a different place, as kids we were sent outside by our parents to explore the world around us and play. Most of that time spent in the hills and woods in both Enfield and East Lyme Connecticut.

It would be a shame if open lands were restricted or off limits to our children, yet one more road block in childhood. I understand now and understood way back then that if I was hurt by my own actions that I was responsible, not the land owner or town or municipality just because they owned the land.

Here are some points I'd like to cite from other sources to advocate for this bill:

Ensuring Consistency Policies that encourage Recreation for the Public · Why single out municipal landowners to not have the same liability protection as private, corporate, and state landowners? Consistent strong liability protection for all landowners makes sense to promote outdoor physical activity.

· The CT DEP has given millions of dollars in grants to municipalities to protect open space. It doesn't make sense that these lands would be considered by some towns as liabilities rather than as assets. Municipalities have protected over 75,000 acres of lands as open space and it would be disastrous to either lose momentum on land conservation efforts by municipalities or lose the recreational opportunities that these lands provide.

· All 50 states in the United States have enacted Recreational Liability Statutes that confer some degree of liability protection to landowners who allow the general public to enter upon or make use of their land for recreational purposes. Most states include municipalities in their definition of protected landowners.

Maintaining Economic Benefits associated with Recreation · Recreational outfitters like Eastern Mountain Sports, Fleet Feet, REI, and scores of Bicycle Shops employ thousands of people in Connecticut and generate considerable revenues for the state. If recreational access to municipal lands were restricted or closed, these businesses would feel the impact directly.

· Trails and other recreational amenities are one of the top reasons why people locate in and stay in communities. Residential Real Estate is more valuable when there is some proximity to open space and recreational opportunities.

Public Health and Safety

· If municipal lands are closed to recreation, kids will in many instances be forced to play in unsafe areas. In the wake of Conway v. Wilton, Bridgeport closed 8 playgrounds. Are the children safer now that they have to play in parking lots or on sidewalks?

· One of the reasons for our nation's youth obesity crisis (and perhaps attention deficit disorder as well) is the large number of children who are addicted to TV and electronic games. Kids need safe areas in the outdoors to play, and municipal lands are often the only lands available

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,
Stephen Eldredge