

Geoffrey L Meissner

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Re: H.B. 6557 – A bill to protect municipalities offering access to recreational lands.

I rise to support the passage of H.B. 6557. I give my support to this bill based on the three different roles in which I find myself. I am a director of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, I am an avid hiker and camper, and finally I am father of a 15 year old son. Let me take each of these in turn.

CFPA has been acting to the benefit of Connecticut outdoors and Connecticut citizens since 1896. I am extremely proud to be associated with the strong environmental legacy and the ongoing stewardship which in which CFPA continues to engage. CFPA's mission is to connect Connecticut citizens to the land. In a real sense, our Connecticut outdoors is a legacy that is invested in all of us to protect and to pass on to future generations. Much of this outdoor land is contained in state lands and forests. But in addition a good deal is owned by local municipalities for the benefit of each of 169 towns in Connecticut. It behooves us to support these towns to ensure that our great outdoor areas continue to offer Connecticut citizens their advantages without restriction. This bill will go a long way to helping mitigating risk associated with this access.

I have always had a strong love for the out of doors. It is a place of peace and oneness with the world that leaves me with a sense of spiritual well being every time I venture out on one of the trails. I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to walk all of Connecticut's blue blazed trails, as well as many of the trails that local communities have created. All citizens deserve to share the joys that the outdoors provide. Indeed, this is a birthright of all Connecticut citizens. While not everyone will take advantage of this, it strikes me that the towns have recognized the spiritual, ecological and health aspects of providing access to a wooded path to their citizens. This one of the best ways to put these resources in within reach of the largest number of citizens. To this end, anything that can be done to help out those towns is vital.

Finally, my son Tad is a wonderful 15 year old. He has grown up in the woods, since birth, hiking and camping. We went to the woods often, regardless of the weather, the time of day, or the season of the year. The out doors has taught Tad confidence in himself. He has learned how to take care of himself, to sleep with comfort under the stars and to take comfort in the feel of nature around him. The woods relieve stress, improve scholarship, and has centered him as a thoughtful and forward looking young man. The parklands and forests of Connecticut are a classroom and laboratory for the growth of our youth. We need to continue to make them available to as many kids as possible in order to achieve a better citizenry for Connecticut. I consider to be no higher reason to support access for all our youth to all the out door spaces our state is blessed with.

Please support and pass this bill.

Thank you for listening,

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