



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

REPRESENTATIVE GAIL LAVIELLE  
ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

MEMBER  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
ROOM 4200  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591  
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700  
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-1423  
EMAIL: Gail.Lavielle@housegop.ct.gov

### Testimony In Support of HB 6557 An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands

Judiciary Committee  
April 4, 2011

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Senator Kissel, Representative Hetherington, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 6557, An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands.

This bill would restore to municipalities the same limited immunity from liability that is extended under the Recreational Land Use Act to other types of owners of land who make their property available without charge to the public for recreational purposes.

Restoring this protection to towns and cities is particularly important at a time when there is so much focus both on health and wellness initiatives and on reducing automobile usage by facilitating the use of non-motorized modes of transportation like biking and walking.

In my district, which includes most of the Town of Wilton and the eastern portion of the City of Norwalk, several such initiatives are underway. The Wilton YMCA, which recently received a grant for programs designed to combat childhood obesity, is working with the Town of Wilton to develop a wellness zone that would facilitate bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the town's central areas. Wilton and Norwalk are also collaborating with Ridgefield, Redding, and Danbury on the development of the Norwalk River Valley Trail, a multi-use trail which would extend from Norwalk to Danbury and provide links to rail stations, parks, and other town facilities. Segments of the trail will include municipal land.

The existing law restricts the freedom of towns to pursue initiatives like these. As our towns and cities continue to grapple with increasing costs and declining revenues, they should not have to cope with the uncertainties of exposure to unlimited and unknown liability that are currently a consequence of making municipal land available for public use.

One of Connecticut's greatest attractions as a place to live is its natural landscape. Protecting open space and making it available to the public for recreation is a priority for many of our towns, and this legislation would help them achieve it.

I would like to submit one suggestion to the Committee: that "walking" be added to the list of activities in the definition of "recreational purpose", because municipal land is often located in urban areas where the term "hiking" may not apply.

I thank you for raising this bill, and I respectfully request that the members of the Committee support it.