

TESTIMONY OF
THE CONNECTICUT RECREATION & PARKS ASSOCIATION
And
THE GREATER DANBURY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
THE MILFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
THE NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BEFORE
THE LEGISLATURE'S JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
10:00 AM, MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2011
ROOM 2C, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Good morning. My name is Marshall R. Collins. I am appearing in my capacity as Counsel for Government Relations for the Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association ("CRPA") as well as the three referenced Chambers of Commerce.

CRPA is a non-profit 501(C) (3) organization dedicated to the promotion, development, and improvement of all recreation and parks services within the State of Connecticut. CRPA has approximately 700 members, who represent almost all 169 towns in Connecticut.

CRPA and the three Chambers of Commerce strongly support HB 6557 AAC Liability For The Recreational Use Of Lands.

HB 6557 provides reasonable and necessary limitations on municipal liability for the recreational use of lands. The legislation is long overdue.

Open Space has many benefits, including improving water quality, protection groundwater, preventing flooding, improving the quality of the air we breathe, providing vegetative buffers to development, and producing habitat for wildlife.

Providing and encouraging recreational access to open spaces has other benefits: hunting and fishing has become an economic building block in our national economy generating more than 1.6 million jobs and more than \$2 billion annually in salaries, wages, and business earnings. In 2006, more than \$70 billion was generated in sportsmen-related retail sales. With the ripple effect this translates to more than \$190 billion in total economic activity.

Our parks and open space provide students young and old with an opportunity to learn about our nation's unique historical cultural heritage. Our public lands are outdoor classrooms where the learning

experience never ends, regardless of whether the lesson is about wildlife, history, geology or the environment. Children and families are able to connect to preserved landscapes in a hands-on manner they simply cannot receive by reading a textbook or watching a documentary.

There are intangible and invaluable benefits in preserving public lands and telling the stories of our state's natural and cultural heritage. Our state and local parks, trails, and greenways provide day-to-day getaways for children and families.

A study by Penn State University showed significant correlations to reductions in stress, lowered blood pressure, and perceived physical health to the length of stay in visits to and usage of parks.

Please help us continue to provide our citizens and visitors opportunity to enjoy these municipal resources that we have invested considerable resources towards preserving and making accessible for all.

Municipalities should be afforded the same legal protection that has been given to private landowners for the very same reason that their immunity was granted initially.

Therefore CRPA and the three Chambers of Commerce respectfully ask that you favorably report HB 6557.

This completes my testimony. Thank you for your consideration.