

Testimony on SB831 AAC Municipal Liability for Recreational Activities on Certain Open Space Lands.

Thank you to the Committee members for your service and for listening to my comments.

My name is Shari Cantor. I am a resident of West Hartford CT and a Town Councilor. I am also an avid runner, biker, mother of four young men, and a member of the North Central Connecticut Region Board of the American Heart Association. In my most critical role as mother of four boys, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of recreational spaces for play, for competitive and noncompetitive sports, for walking in nature and for the opportunity to have a space to experience a quiet moment. I have treasured memories of going for a walk through the tree covered path at the Reservoir # 6 on Route 44 with four little boys watching the canadian geese land on the water and talking about the unique formation they make as they fly south or return home. I have new and recent memories of training for the Hartford half-marathon with my 22 year old in that same place, running 3 times around, so we would be ready for the 13.1 mile event that we ran to benefit

Connecticut Children's Medical Center's cardiac care unit this past November.

The parks and recreational facilities that we have are treasures. They enrich us, they bond us together, they make us healthier mentally and physically and they make us better stewards of our world.

As a Town Councilor I have seen first hand how important it is to have parks and recreational places in our own neighborhoods, easily accessible by all and increasingly utilized, especially in these financially challenging times. How absurd it would be to close parks and recreational areas all around the state because of the rising liability costs and eliminate these most important resources. As elected officials we are focused on budgets and bottom lines but we are also committed to maintaining and improving the quality of our constituents' lives. What a shame this would be if we didn't address this issue, resulting in gated unused open spaces that generate no benefit to anyone.

The passion and connection to the MDC reservoirs that the residents in West Hartford and

surrounding towns was made crystal clear when the word spread that MDC might close the reservoirs to public access, two of which are in our town's borders due to a lawsuit with a sizeable award that makes the liability insurance prohibitive. This was clearly of immense concern to hundreds of surrounding area residents. These facilities have become part of the fabric of our everyday lives. Many people came out to speak from the heart and plead to the MDC Commissioners to make sure these valued lands were available to all. Thank you to the Committee for drafting this bill and for understanding the importance of access for all of the residents of Connecticut.

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