



Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, members of the Environment Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today. My, name is Ralph Eno, I am First Selectman in the Town of Lyme and I am here to speak in favor of Raised Bill 834: **AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE PRIORITIES AND FUNDING FOR THE PURCHASE OF SUCH PROPERTRIES.**

First, the bill is true to the spirit of grass roots government. It lets local towns decide whether they want to adopt this enabling legislation.

Preserving open space is a vital smart growth tool for small communities trying to preserve their rural character and quality of life. In fact, many already have line items in their budgets dedicated to reserving funds for open space acquisition. However, these are generally discretionary budget considerations of some size which are the first to be cut when we are confronted by economic hard times. Lyme has either reduced or eliminated open space funding from its budget for the past two fiscal years. The dedicated revenue stream provided by a conveyance tax would offer a welcome and valuable buffer to this reality keeping long range planning and development strategies viable.

The brownfield remediation component in the bill makes it attractive to larger municipalities and the \$150,000 threshold protects first time and affordable housing buyers. I would respectfully suggest that an amendment to allow this fund to be utilized for the construction or acquisition of affordable housing as well would make the legislation even more effective.

Many other states have had such legislation in place for some time. The track record has demonstrated that it does not compromise real estate sales or new home construction. It is past time for Connecticut to get on board and give our cities and towns a funding mechanism to offset the impact on property taxes when such ventures are undertaken. This is especially true in light of the state's diminished capacity to assist in funding open space acquisition.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I would be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.