

To : Committee on Planning and Development

I strongly support proposed S.B. 43, S.B. 90 and H.B. 5254 which would restore recreational liability protection and immunity to municipalities, railroads, quasi-public agencies, and metropolitan districts under the Recreational Land Use Act. All three bills encourage these entities to permit the public to enjoy recreational activities on their property without the threat of certain lawsuits. It also encourages more landowners to make their land available to the public for recreational purposes. This immunity is vital to ensuring adequate opportunities and open space for public recreation.

As vice chairman of Willington's Conservation Commission, which manages several town open space properties, parks and trails for passive recreation, I can attest to the large number of residents who derive physical and spiritual benefits from being able to access this municipal open space. Our open space provides adults and children with safe places for exercise, wildlife viewing, nature study and areas of solitude to escape the stresses of the day. It would be devastating if our town had to close access to these properties due to concerns about lawsuits.

According to Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection website: <http://www.ct.gov/dep>, the State has an overall goal of protecting 21 % of Connecticut's land as open space by 2023, with 11% of that goal coming from land owned by municipalities, private non-profit land conservation organizations, water companies and the federal government. The State envisions a mixed landscape providing outdoor recreation to Connecticut's citizens, protecting water supplies, preserving fragile natural communities and homes for plants and animals, offering green spaces for city residents; and providing an operational, natural landscape for the harvest of farm and forest products. In order to reach our State goals of protecting open space and providing adequate outdoor recreational opportunities, we need to ensure our laws encourage municipalities and other entities to continue to acquire and manage open space for public recreational use.

Thank you for an opportunity to provide public comment.

Sincerely,

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