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March 13, 2012

To: Senator Edward Meyer, Co-Chair
Representative Richard Roy, Co-Chair
Members of the Environment Committee

Re: Raised Bill No. 5413
An Act Concerning Invasive Plants

I am writing as a board member of the Connecticut Botanical Society in support of the above-referenced bill. I am also the Field Trip Chairperson for the society and, as such, visit many natural areas within the State of Connecticut. I am therefore familiar with the problems caused by invasive plants.

Firstly, I extend my thanks to the Environment Committee for their past support and attention to the problem of invasive plant species. Secondly, I wish to attest to the fact that invasive plants are having a negative impact upon many of the state's natural areas including coastal habitats, forests, shrublands, and waterways. I am also a member of the Connecticut Association of Wetland Scientists. We recently created a small grant program in honor of Dr. Leslie J. Mehrhoff. The grant offers \$1,000 and is intended to aid on-the-ground control and/or and preservation efforts for native plant communities within Connecticut. The response has been overwhelming in that groups from around the state have submitted proposals and all have requested funds to aid in invasive plant control and eradication. All of the applicants describe volunteer efforts and it is clear that there are countless concerned residents of Connecticut who are willing to volunteer by attending work parties or monitoring new invasions. The role of the Invasives Plant Coordinator is critical to the organization of such efforts.

I have been attending the meetings of the Invasives Plant Council on a regular basis and have observed directly the vital role the Council serves in providing a forum for our citizens. Different interest groups can present their views and concerns. Most recently, there have been extensive discussions about potential issues with running bamboo. The Council is researching the biology of the plant as well as looking in to other states' responses to the bamboo issue. The Coordinator has been instrumental in bringing all points of view to the Council over this issue as well as many others.

The Coordinator position is vital to the work of the Council. This individual contributes countless hours of work and expertise to the job. Without the coordinator, the Council would be unable to fulfill its mission. I strongly urge the Environment Committee to vote favorably on Raised Bill No. 5413. Our citizenry is clearly concerned about the destructive impacts that invasive plant species are having on Connecticut's lakes, rivers, forests, and shrublands. Early detection and rapid response plans, education of the public, and coordinating volunteers are critical to the preservation of natural areas of our state. The Coordinator position is essential to the continuation of these efforts.

Sincerely,

Penelope C. Sharp