

To: Environment Committee

From: Donna R. Ellis, Senior Extension Educator, University of Connecticut  
and Co-Chairperson, Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group

Date: March 16, 2012

Submitted testimony Re: **H.B. No. 5413, "AN ACT CONCERNING INVASIVE PLANTS"**

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and members of the Environment Committee:

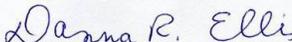
My name is Donna Ellis and I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. No. 5413, "An Act Concerning Invasive Plants." I am a Senior Extension Educator in the Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Connecticut. I am involved in many programs at the University and throughout the region that concentrate on invasive plant educational outreach: identification, the use of best management practices for environmental stewardship, and the selection of non-invasive alternatives.

I also serve as Co-chairperson for the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG), an ad hoc statewide organization founded in 1997 whose mission is to promote educational awareness of invasive plants in natural and managed landscapes. The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group is a consortium of individuals, organizations, and agencies representing more than 100 affiliations, including educational and research institutions, conservation groups, state and federal agencies, the green industry, gardening clubs, and the general public. The Invasive Plants Coordinator is an integral part of the Working Group who provides support for numerous tasks, assists with the CIPWG website, and works with other members to plan our biennial symposia.

Non-native invasive plants are a growing concern to Connecticut citizens as they outcompete native plants in woodlands, meadows, and wetlands, reducing the quality of these valuable habitats. Aggressive invaders, including Oriental bittersweet, Japanese knotweed, and mile-a-minute vine continue to grow at an alarming pace, moving rapidly into natural areas as well as residential and municipal properties throughout Connecticut. As I conduct invasive plant educational outreach programs in towns across the state, I have become increasingly aware how much work still needs to be done to inform the public and interest groups about the harm that invasive plants cause to the environment and to provide solutions to reduce their negative impacts. With limited funds available for invasive plant early detection and control, communities are recognizing the importance of volunteers who are ready to get involved and make a difference. We need to encourage Connecticut citizenry to take action to slow the spread of these non-native invaders. Many of our concerned residents are willing to volunteer their time to survey for new invasive populations, monitor existing occurrences, and participate in work parties to reduce invasive populations. The Invasive Plants Coordinator would provide invaluable support to organize and coordinate these efforts. While attending meetings of the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council, it is evident how important the role of the Coordinator is in serving as the primary contact for all Council members and in assisting and supporting this vital forum for citizens and interest groups to discuss and reach consensus on invasive plant issues.

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for your continued interest in invasive plants as well as your past support for and attention to the problems of invasives.

Sincerely,

  
Donna R. Ellis