



**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment
Before the Committee on Housing**

***In support of HB 6121, AN ACT CONCERNING AFFORDABLE HOUSING
DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN WATERSHED AREAS.***

Submitted by Lauren Savidge
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Connecticut Fund for the Environment works to protect and improve the land, air and water of Connecticut. We use legal and scientific expertise and bring people together to achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations.

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Butler, and members of the Committee on Housing,

Connecticut Fund for the Environment submits this testimony in support of Proposed HB 6121, An Act Concerning Affordable Housing Developments Within Watershed Areas. If passed, this legislation would require affordable housing developers to protect water resources by requiring a density of not more than one unit per two acres of affordable housing developments in a drinking water watershed.

Clean and safe public drinking water has been a state priority for years. Approximately 530,000 acres of land in Connecticut is classified as public water supply watershed land. Drinking water quality is directly affected by development on and maintenance of watershed lands because these lands act as natural filters, trapping sediment, chemicals and other pollutants in the water.

Connecticut watershed lands are threatened by development pressure. Nearly half of the watershed lands in Connecticut – more than a quarter of a million acres – are not permanently protected and are susceptible to development. Land use decisions over the next several decades are significant and will have an enduring effect on drinking water quality and public health.

This legislation would protect watershed lands from intensive development by establishing a minimum lot size of one unit per two acres. This affordable housing density maximum is an important and measurable guideline supported by sound science and established principles of watershed management. The state Department of Public Health has regularly emphasized this density maximum in watershed lands, especially in advising local communities in developing water quality management plans. Higher-density development in watershed lands increases the risk of water quality degradation because intensive development attracts certain features, like sewer systems, that can cause harmful and irreversible effects on drinking water quality.

While the Connecticut Appellate Court recently recognized the importance of this density maximum in watershed lands in the context of a Section 8-30(g) affordable housing proposal, *Eureka V., LLC v. Ridgefield P & Z Commission et al.*, 139 Conn. App. 256; 57 A.3d 372 (2012), other courts have been more ambiguous. We welcome this legislation to clarify the importance of drinking watershed land protection from intensive development for the public health.

Sincerely,

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