

Testimony Submitted By:

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Testimony in Support of: Raised Bill 5415 An Act Concerning the Air Line State Park Trail

Dear Members of the Environment Committee,

As an avid user of the Airline State Trail, I am writing to support HB 5415. This trail is a significant and heavily used recreational asset for all of the communities through which it passes. It also represents a part of the history of eastern portion of our state. Protecting the trail and insuring its continuity for the thousands of trails users is of the utmost importance.

I would however ask that that the following verbiage be changed:

Please delete "Eminent Domain". Connecticut's parks, recreation lands and trails have been assembled by acquisition, donation, bequeaths and grants – they are truly a recreation system built by the public that loves them. The use of eminent domain has never been an acceptable use of acquisition and, I feel, would send a terrible message to potential land donors who might not appreciate the off-putting language of "eminent domain" and discouraged from gifting land.

Please change "Foot path" to: "path for the use of passive recreation, including all non-motorized forms of recreation". The trail is very active year-round. Not only does it carry "Foot" traffic but also bicycles, baby carriages, wheel chairs, cross-country skiers, equestrians, and horse-drawn carriages. The "foot path" language would preclude these uses.

This trail not only provides recreational opportunities and supports healthy lifestyles, it attracts day-visitors to the area who frequent area businesses and tour other nearby attractions. Ultimately, it is proposed to become part of the East Coast Greenway envisioned as a multi-use version of the Appalachian Trail – allowing travel along the entire eastern seaboard – a major tourism draw. This bill will preserve the historic Airline Trail for its users and ensure Connecticut's place in future tourism endeavors.

Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.