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Statement of
Kevin Sullivan
President
Connecticut Nursery & Landscape Association
Before the Environment Committee
In Support of SB 238
February 28, 2014

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban and members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Kevin Sullivan and I am the President of the Connecticut Nursery & Landscape Association. I own and manage Chestnut Hill Nursery in Stafford.

Following many years of research and consultation within our industry, CNLA strongly believes it's time for a state license for landscapers.

Today, most of the state's landscapers are already "licensed" as home improvement contractors. We propose a new license specific for landscapers be established to *take the place* of this requirement. While the contractor license serves mostly a vehicle to collect complaints, our proposal would elevate the landscaper profession and better protect consumers by raising standards and requiring more education and training for this important business.

We estimate there are between 1,200-1,800 companies installing landscaping across the state. Their annual sales are several hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Their services are subject to the state sales tax. The landscaper license would better insure that all who practice the craft are competent and complying with state law.

Licensure of landscapers is a logical next step in the 50-year history of their business. In that time period, the state has adopted licensing for landscape architects. Treatment of trees now is conducted by licensed arborists. Landscape lighting is done by licensed electricians. Landscape irrigation is in the hands of licensed plumbing/irrigation professionals.

Recent major storms have shown the public just how important landscapers are, and how critical the proper planting and placement of trees and landscape plants are to public safety. Professional landscapers practice right tree/right place methods, for example, to minimize dangers of oversized trees near power lines.

We have submitted to this Committee a detailed proposal that places the licensing authority for landscapers in the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. To summarize our plan:

- How the License Would Be Administered. A state board of landscapers would be created to assist the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection in procedures for administering the license, including examinations, best practices, qualifications for the levels of licensing, etc. The Governor would appoint five members of the Board from lists of candidates proposed by “relevant nonprofit trade associations serving the industry”. The Commissioner would have legal responsibility to issue regulations for the details of the license.

- How the License Would Work. Each company in the state performing landscape business would be required to be licensed. SB 238 creates four “specialty” levels: installer, maintenance, salesman or designer. Only one license is required per company. Landscapers would be required to carry a sufficient amount of liability insurance, and display their license number wherever they go. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection would have the power to suspend a license for bad business practices. The term of the license would be five years.

- Grandfather Clause. Landscapers who can prove they have been in the business for three years prior to the start of the licensing, could get the license without having to take an examination.

- Cost to the State. The cost to administer the license would be paid for by the licensing and application fees, so there should be no fiscal impact to the state budget. CNLA estimates there are approximately 1,200-1,800 companies that would fall under this license.

- Recertification Required. Landscapers would be required to take continuing education courses to maintain their license, which would be done by trade associations, colleges, and other industry suppliers.

- Penalties. A person or company could face fines of \$500 per day for violating the license requirements.

We understand there is a concern over several aspects of this bill from a few organizations. We want to work with those groups to address any concerns so that a consensus bill can be reported from your committee. Thank you.