

SB 70

IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 70, *An Act Concerning The Preservation Of Lands Under The Control Of The Department Of Energy And Environmental Protection And The Department Of Agriculture.*

Environment Committee Public Hearing

February 19, 2014

Representative Miller, State-Senator Linares, Environment Committee, I am here providing testimony in **support of S.B. 70**, An Act Concerning the Preservation of Lands Under the Control of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture.

As a resident of the lower Connecticut River Valley, and former President of the Earth Charter Community of the Lower Valley, I am speaking in favor of this bill because it is crucial to help ensure our state parks, forests, wildlife management areas and other public open space remain dedicated to conservation and recreation purposes as they have been designated through an exercise of the public trust of the citizens of the State of Connecticut.

Currently, State-owned lands, especially those in the Recreational and Natural Heritage Trust Program, have no legal protection to prevent conveyance to another owner or for another use, including private development.

I am also in favor of a Constitutional amendment to include a provision that would ensure our conservation land and other natural resources in custody of the state shall not be taken or disposed of. I support the recommendations of the Council on Environmental Quality in its special report *"Preserved But Maybe Not: The Impermanence of State Conservation Lands."*

Based on the recent 'Haddam Land Swap' debacle, it is crystal clear that the citizens of the state need assurance that state open space and conservation lands are preserved forever and will not be developed or "swapped" in a manner inconsistent with the important public purposes for which they were acquired.

I strongly urge you to pass this important bill, thank you for your consideration.

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