



**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment,
and its bi-state program Save the Sound,
before the Appropriations Committee on March 2, 2015**



**H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS
THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.**

Connecticut Fund for the Environment ("CFE") is a non-profit environmental organization with over 5,500 members statewide. The mission of CFE, and its bi-state program Save the Sound, is to protect and improve the land, air, and water of Connecticut and Long Island Sound. We use legal and scientific expertise and bring people together to achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations.

Dear Sen. Bye, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment tonight.

When Governor Malloy announced his proposed biennial budget two weeks ago, we, along with many friends and colleagues around the state, were pleased with its historic investment in transportation. The 30-year, \$100 billion vision will offer many opportunities to make our cities more livable and our air cleaner. It takes a crucial step in moving Connecticut forward.

However, we are deeply concerned that some of this state's essential programs were on the chopping block—including an environmental watchdog program, community investment funds, and substantial resources for state parks.

Funding for the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) was eliminated in Governor Malloy's budget. The watchdog of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), CEQ independently reports on the status of Connecticut's environment and pays particular attention to citizen concerns. CEQ is also one of the most efficient of state organizations, with only two staff and an annual budget of just \$180,000. A repeated target for elimination since 2003, CEQ's demise has been prevented over several budget cycles—after recognition by legislators of its tremendous value to the state's citizens and our natural resources. We ask you to save CEQ once again this year.

The Community Investment Act (CIA) has been an invaluable source of support for projects that help preserve Connecticut's unique character, including open space protections, farmland preservation, dairy support, and historic building renovation. Many residents also rely on CIA funds for low-income housing projects. The proposed budget would cut \$15.2 million from the CIA account: \$10M from DEEP's Open Space Grant program, \$5.1M from DECD for historic preservation efforts, and \$100,000 from Department of Agriculture for the Connecticut Food Policy Council. Sweeping these funds would decimate the state's investment in our communities' beauty and quality of life.

Last year, Governor Malloy worked with DEEP to create Connecticut's first new coastal state park in nearly fifty years. This year, his new budget proposed to cut state parks funding by \$2 million dollars, nearly 1/6 of their current operating budget. This is disheartening. State parks preserve natural landscapes, provide refuge for wildlife, and connect people to wild places. The

most likely impact the new budget will be cutting seasonal staff, potentially leaving several parks unmanaged for the busy summer season or even closing them altogether.

And finally, among the miscellaneous cuts proposed in this budget are the closing of the Kensington Fish Hatchery in Berlin and the ending of the state's pheasant-stocking program. In total, these two operations cost about \$350,000 a year. Closing the Kensington Hatchery would also end salmon and trout educational programs designed to get young students engaged and excited about the natural world around them. These cuts, while small, are short-sighted and bring undue harm to Connecticut's hunters, fishers, and students.

While we are pleased that the state is poised to invest heavily in Connecticut's transit and transportation network, we ask that legislators also protect some of the state's most crucial, and long-standing environmental programs. CFE/Save the Sound urges this Committee to protect our state's priorities while preparing for a new future. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and we looking forward to working with members of this Committee and the Legislature as we move forward this spring.

Sincerely,

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