



Connecticut Chapter
2074 Park St.
Hartford, Connecticut 06105
www.connecticut.sierraclub.org
Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Appropriations Committee
March 2, 2015

Testimony In Opposition to Parts of
HB 6824 An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning
General Government

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

We should understand that cutting and snipping small but important items from the proposed state budget is not an effective way to bring the budget into balance. We need a comprehensive structural approach which protects those functions so important to the state.

The Governor's proposed budget damages a number of significant environmental programs. I'll mention four here.

The **Council on Environmental Quality** has been an invaluable resource to the state for forty years. Preservation of this office is a highest priority.

With a volunteer board and only 2 paid staff, it serves as a unique observer of the environment in the state. With a minuscule budget of less than \$200,000, it has for years collected information on a wide variety of environmental issues, served as a forum for citizens to record their complaints, published an invaluable annual report, and provided a knowledgeable and credible source of recommendations pointing out where we need to do better.

Current staff over the years have assembled an extraordinary and comprehensive knowledge of our environment and the issues confronting us.

As an advisory body acting independently of agency or executive oversight, CEQ has the freedom to explore issues of concern and recommend action.

We are well aware of the fiscal challenges facing the state for the coming biennium. We should know the problem cannot not solved by eliminating valuable resources of such tiny cost. But we are grateful for the opportunity to come forward to vigorously protect assets which are important to our mission and our values.

We simply must preserve the integrity and independence of the CEQ. Removing the CEQ to Legislative Management without funding assured does neither.

The **state parks** are an invaluable resource for the state. They provide open space and wildlife habitat. They provide recreational venues which give people opportunities to hike, explore, socialize, swim, boat. The psychological concept of **biophilia** holds that we have a genetically driven need to connect with the natural world. It comes from hundred of thousands of years of evolution where a successful connection was necessary for survival. The state parks give us the opportunities to experience this biophilic satisfaction.

Inadequate funding for the parks has been an issue for years. The major funding cut proposed this year would have significant consequences for maintenance and public access.

Fish hatcheries have for many years ensured that our waters remain stocked. Fishing is an important recreational activity, providing both recreational and economic opportunities for the state, its residents, and visitors.

The CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation and the Five Conservation Districts have for decades provided services for protection of our natural resources, including agriculture. They are a critical element for protection, and provide a conduit for the flow of federal funds to the state. The technical expertise they provide is not available otherwise.