

To: Environment Committee

Re: S.B. No. 347 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PERCENTAGE OF STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDS THAT MAY BE USED TO PURCHASE OPEN SPACE UNDER THE OPEN SPACE AND WATERSHED LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM.

From: Ann Letendre, Vernon Open Space Task Force

I am asking you to VOTE YES for this bill. In addition to the reasons that have been cited in other testimony, I would like to tell you about another situation on how this cap has negatively impacted a major farm preservation effort here in Vernon.

We have been working with a old farming family in Vernon to preserve their land, a farm located in Vernon Center, near I-84, and under heavy development pressures. Unfortunately, the family became aware of the recent delays that have occurred with the acquisition of another farm in the area due to the 70% cap: the Gunther Farm in Tolland, being purchased by the Tolland Agricultural Center. These farmers know each other! Because of that delay, the farming family in Vernon has become reluctant to enter into an agreement with a land preservation organization using the same grant programs. We have now had to scramble to find local benefactors that will provide a bridge loan in order to make the quick cash sale that the family wishes to make. The purchase is a 7-figure transaction, not easy!

Delays in the acquisition purchase of one project have a multiplier effect - the word gets out, and our great state land preservation program now has a perceived blemish, and impacts other potential purchases.

Another point made by other testimony that I want to reiterate is that we are now unexpectedly faced with having to raise significant funding from local funds, a towering challenge for a town that was once a "distressed community" classification.

Two and three year delays in the property acquisition process in our wonderful state land preservation programs just cannot be tolerated. Please remove this 70% cap!

Sincerely
Ann Letendre