



**Testimony**  
**Betsy Gara, Executive Director**  
**Connecticut Council of Small Towns**  
**Before the**  
**Labor & Public Employees Committee**  
**February 4, 2015**

**SB-347, 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.**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) *supports* **SB-347**, which would assist municipalities and other organizations in preserving open space lands by removing the 70% cap on the use of state and federal funds for the purchase of open space lands.

In order to preserve open space lands to protect the scenic beauty and natural habitats in our small towns, many towns have worked with land trusts and conservation groups to purchase open space and watershed lands. These efforts have helped communities preserve their charm and character despite pressure to develop lands.

According to the state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection's website, "the State's overall goal is to preserve 21% of Connecticut's land as open space by the year 2023, a total of 673,210 acres. The initiative includes 10% of open space to be state owned as additions to the State's system of parks, forests, wildlife, fisheries and natural resource management areas, with the remaining 11% owned by municipalities, private nonprofit land conservation organizations, water companies and the federal government. As of October 2010, 73% of this goal has been achieved through the direct purchase of open space by the state and through state support for local acquisitions."

SB-70 will assist the state and towns in meeting its goal of protecting 21% of Connecticut's land as open space by removing limitations on the use of state and federal funds.

**Connecticut Council of Small Towns**  
1245 Farmington Avenue, 101  
West Hartford, CT 06107  
Tel. 860-676-0770; Fax 860-676-2662