

Dear Environment Committee:

My name is Dawn Prentice, 29 Vivian St., Waterford, Ct, 06385. I am writing you today in regards to S.B. 79 An act clarifying provisions of the general statues regarding the use of properly installed and constructed barrier systems for certain plantings.

My family has lived in waterford almost 90 years. The home I live in is my family homestead, built by my grandfather, lived in by my mother, myself, my children, and even grandchildren. We have been small business owners in Waterford, board of ed employees, public works employees, and alumnus of the school system. Five generations living, working, still being educated in this town. Now, because of an uninterested Town, a grudging neighbor, and invasive bamboo, my existence in this home is threatened to be destroyed.

I spend 2 to 3 months every year hunting, digging, cutting, spraying, and removing literally dozens of feet of bamboo in my yard. I must break down stone planters and rebuild them, sometimes several times. I must crawl under decks, dig up and replant existing gardens, several times. The bamboo has spread from my neighbors yard (where she planted it on our adjoining property line) under my decks, sidewalks, stone wall and is presently pushing against the foundation of my home. My quality of life here no longer exists as I spend 6 to 8 hours a day, 7 days a week desperately working to maintain the safety of my property and home.

I have spent several years begging the Town of Waterford for help. Their response is no, we choose not to, you handle it yourself. I even enlisted the help of an interview with Channel 3 eyewitness news to which the town responded with the same answer. Not everyone in Ct has the financial ability to retain a lawyer. Not everyone in Ct has the physical ability to battle the bamboo. We have the right to expect our elected officials to serve and protect their fellow citizens from anything that threatens our property, our lives, and our pursuit of happiness.

Towns have planning & zoning depts, environmental depts. etc. local laws dictate distances to property lines, erections of fences, additions to homes, placements of driveways, sheds, firepits, etc. They enforce these laws. However, a resident plants bamboo, an invasive destroyers of property and structures, and the town refuses to enforce it. Bamboo spreads It does not care about property lines. It does not care about yards, fences, sidewalks, decks, stonewalls, or even a homes' foundation. It will push through paved town roads, municipal buildings. It will breach through sewer systems, catch basins, water lines, propane lines, and natural gas lines. It plummets a homes' and eventually a neighborhoods' value. It slows the process of selling property. It destroys a citizen's right to live in peace and enjoy their own property.

Yet, the town has no resources to battle this? Waterford argues over street names. We have a new cancer center, new neighborhoods, new shopping centers bringing in tax revenue. We tore down all the schools and built multimillion dollar new ones. The list goes on and on, but, it cannot afford to enforce a law that already exists in the state of ct. Why? Because they "choose not to".

We need to change the language of the law. Instead of "towns may enforce the law", it needs to say "towns SHALL" enforce the law. My tax dollars help pay for enforcement of environmental and zoning laws in this town and bamboo IS an environmental and zoning issue, aside from a nuisance.

The law needs to have the words "or to grow" added to clarify the 40 foot buffer zone.

Subsection G needs to be added to authorize individuals to seek private enforcement of the buffer zone in court and authorize attorney fees. Individuals need to have the right to receive not only damages, but court and attorney fees if they are the prevailing party.

Subsection G is an absolute necessity in the event an individual chooses to sue the offending homeowner privately and not seek the town's help in doing so. However, the towns MUST be held liable to enforce this law in a timely, fine-imposed, consistent manner and take responsibility for protecting its' citizens.

An absolute buffer zone and complete containment of bamboo must be legally stated. However, ALL bamboo should be removed from our state and vigilant u[keep enforced to keep it our of our state.

The bill should also include that no property containing bamboo be allowed to be sold or rented until all bamboo is eradicated.

Smaller towns in ct have been extremely diligent and aggressive in enforcing the bamboo laws and will fine and remove it at the homeowners' expense. It's time to make this mandatory for every town in Ct and take our property and homes back from this invasive destroyer. We need your help in making this happen.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Dawn Prentice