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TO: The Committee on Environment

RE: Opposition to SB 385

Chairman Kennedy, Chairman Albis and members of the Committee on Environment, on behalf of Housatonic Railroad I appreciate having this opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB 385 385. I am writing to respectfully urge the committee to reject the raised bill for the following reasons: 1. Passage of the bill will lead to an environment that will negatively impact rail safety in Connecticut by creating a process that will inhibit railroads ability to control vegetation within and along railroad rights of way; and 2. The proposed bill is discriminatory favoring other industries and in particular favoring the trucking industry.

Housatonic Railroad, like all railroads participating in interstate commerce, is required to adhere to a strict safety regime administered by the Federal Railroad Administration. Part of that safety regimen is a program to keep areas within and adjacent to our track structure clear of vegetation. It is essential that railroad inspectors can see what they are inspecting, particularly our rail and track structure. The inspection of track and structures is one important component to preventing accidents or derailments. It is also critical that crews can work around trains without being obstructed by vegetation that could trip an employee and cause injury or worse through falling into the path of a train. It is critical that train crews have good sight lines that enable them to spot issues that could endanger the safety of the public or endanger the safety of the train and its crew. Finally, it is critical that vegetation be cleared from areas adjacent to tracks to reduce the risk of fires. We believe the proposed bill will ultimately lead to a regimen that will weaken the safety of operations within and adjacent to rail rights of way.

The proposed legislation is discriminatory. It singles out railroads who use a very very small percentage of weed spray applied in Connecticut and fails to address very large volumes of weed spray used in Agricultural applications, Highway applications, by utilities and by individual homeowners.. By exempting highway applications the bill provides a significant benefit to the trucking industry as they would be required to pay a larger share of incremental costs associated with highway maintenance. Thus the proposed bill harms the most environmentally sound method of freight transportation in Connecticut and benefits the trucking industry which is considerably less beneficial to the environment.

Railroads in Connecticut manage vegetation in an environmentally sound manner using materials that are available to the public in their local hardware stores. Housatonic, like other railroads,

does not engage in vegetation control itself but retains the services of a trained and licensed firm specializing in these applications. The firm follows protocols required by the manufactures of vegetation control materials and environmental authorities. They are highly trained to insure materials are handled properly and are applied in a manner that meets sound environmental standards. They perform an essential service that protects the environment and protects the safety of the railroad.

We believe passage of SB 385 will lead to a weakening of rail safety in Connecticut and we urge that it not be approved.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "F. Colin Pease".

F. Colin Pease
Vice President - Special Projects