

### Testimony in Support of SJ5

Hello. My name is Kara Murphy and I'm a resident of Guilford, Connecticut. I'm submitting testimony in support of S.J.5 brought forward by the Environment Committee.

Thank you to the Environment Committee for bringing this bill forward. I'm grateful this issue is being brought to the attention of the legislature and ultimately Connecticut's citizenry. It's an important issue and a constitutional amendment is necessary. While it seems obvious that lands we believe to be protected should be protected in perpetuity I know that dangerous tools exist, such as the Conveyance Act, which give the General Assembly the ability to sell, trade, and give away public lands to a town, business, or even an individual. A constitutional amendment to protect state lands is crucial to the future of Connecticut's landscape. Without it landowners cannot trust that the property they give to the state is safe (even when a deed restriction is included) which likely prevents important, valuable land from being donated to the state in the first place. Additionally, without this constitutional amendment, fragmentation will occur as ecologically important properties are given away, traded or sold. The potential results of fragmentation are numerous: wildlife habitat loss, loss of access to recreational space, loss of viable farmland, and, of course, the negative ripple effects of all of these to the health of the people of Connecticut.

Yes, it is high time an amendment to protect our state lands is considered! As written, SJ5 has many positives but I believe it can be strengthened even more. SJ5 should be expanded to include all lands of agricultural, conservation, or recreational values, not just conservation value. Also, the word LOCAL should be added to requirements for a public hearing. Holding a hearing in close proximity to the proposed land sale, swap or giveaway is only fair. Another imperative language change has to do with the wording of SJ5 only recognizing funds realized by the sale of public lands. Many times lands in the Conveyance Act are proposed to be given away or traded without any compensation and the current language of SJ5 would not account for these lands. One final way to strengthen the bill would be to require separate bills to the General Assembly for each public land proposed for Conveyance.

I am very pleased and appreciative that the Environment Committee had proposed SJ5 and is holding a hearing. Thank you for working to better protect our state lands for all of us here and now as well as the future residents of Connecticut.

Sincerely,



Kara Murphy  
Resident of Guilford, Connecticut