

TESTIMONY FOR S.J.5, PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE STATE
CONSTITUTION TO PROTECT OUR PUBLIC LANDS

To: Environment Committee
From: James Parda, CT Certified Forester
Subject: S.J.5

I respectfully submit this written testimony as a member of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) and retired DEEP Forester who worked in State Forests for 34 years. I am familiar with the loss of protected state forest land taken by “Conveyance Act” with no review or statement of potential environmental impact based on change of use. This was always very disturbing.

The CFPA has proposed an effective remedy to this critical issue. I support the S.J.5 amendment to the State Constitution with recommended changes. The amendment can be improved to protect lands that have agricultural and recreational values too. It is also important to correct the past by requiring local public hearings. In towns with state forests and parks, local citizens often use these open spaces regularly. It is also important not to hide parcels being considered for conveyance in amendments to other bills and pushed through at the last minute. It is imperative to have an open discussion and separate bills considered by the legislature to protect public lands.

This is indeed an important issue for the General Assembly to address and I feel a Constitutional Amendment is necessary.

Thank you for holding a public hearing on the need to better protect public lands.