

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony
Senate Bill No. 1054, House Bill No. 7322
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
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Senator Fonfara, Senator Frantz, Representative Rojas and Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

As the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its 137 land trusts, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) advocates for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the land conservation community in Connecticut. Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony regarding the following bills:

S.B.1054: AAC VARIOUS TAX RATES, THE USE OF CERTAIN TAXES AND FEES FOR TOURISM AND OTHER PROGRAMS, ESTABLISHING THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT AND CONCERNING THE PURPOSE OF THE CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (Support with Changes); and **H.B. 7322:** AAC STATE AND LOCAL REVENUE (Oppose Section 31)

CLCC supports S.B.1054, with changes:

In our February 17, 2017 testimony to the Appropriations Committee regarding the Governor's Budget (H.B. 7027), CLCC expressed our opposition to, *inter alia*, proposed cuts to DEEP's already bare-boned budget and to the elimination of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). We also voiced support for the establishment of creative mechanisms to offset the proposed cuts and generate new revenues dedicated for the purpose of supporting the operation and maintenance of our State Parks, and related outdoor recreation programs at DEEP.

S.B. 1054, in particular Sections 6 and 7, would establish one such revenue generating mechanism known as "Passport for the Parks". This proposal would implement a \$10 fee (equivalent to \$5 per year) on passenger motor vehicle registrations, for which individuals receive free parking at state parks, with the revenue to be used: (1) by DEEP for the care and maintenance of state parks and state campgrounds; (2) to support the duties and activities of the Council on Environmental Quality pursuant to C.G.S. section 22a-11; and (3) to support DEEP's fish hatcheries and pheasant stocking program.

CLCC supports the concept for Passport for the Parks and concurs with the recommended modifications to the current language of S.B. 1054 as set forth in the testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association.

CLCC opposes H.B. 7322 (Section 31):

CLCC is opposed to section 31 of H.B. 7322 which would eliminate the nonprofit sales tax exemption on purchases of goods and services. The proposal places a tremendous financial burden on the nonprofit organizations, like land trusts, that all communities depend upon for important services.



Connecticut is the home to 137+ land trusts, the third most in the country; and collectively they have protected at least 190,000 acres. Whether staffed or all-volunteer, urban or rural, Connecticut's land trusts were created for the purpose of upholding their mission to conserve and protect land *in perpetuity*. This not only means acquiring the land, but also managing it pursuant to best practices, monitoring it for encroachments and other violations, and, perhaps most importantly, using it to educate, inspire and build connections between people and nature for generations to come.

Already operating under the strain of limited budgets, the long-term viability of many of the state's land trusts would be further threatened by this additional operating expense. Please reject any proposal that would eliminate the nonprofit sales tax exemption.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on these important issues.