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Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Public Hearing Subject Matter	Position
<b>Proposed H.B. 6926:</b> AN ACT PERMITTING MUNICIPALITIES TO IMPOSE A BUYER'S FEE ON THE CONVEYANCE OF REAL PROPERTY.	Support

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. For over 120 years, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly on various sustainable forestry, State Park and Forest, trail recreation, and land conservation issues.

We thank the Planning and Development Committee for raising **Proposed H.B. 6926**, An Act Permitting Municipalities to Impose a Buyer's Fee on the Conveyance of Real Property.

It is critical that municipalities who wish to protect open space and farmland have a mechanism to do so, especially when State funding is so diminished. This bill would authorize, not require, municipalities to charge up to a 1% fee on buyers of real estate to generate funding to acquire and manage open space properties. The first \$150,000 of the purchase price would be excluded from the fee to ensure the fee is not a burden on buyers of the most affordable housing.

Having a local funding source for open space is particularly important because the major state and federal open space grant programs – the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program/Community Investment Act, Farmland Preservation Program, Land & Water Conservation Fund, NRCS funding for farmland preservation, and others – require local matching dollars. If there isn't a mechanism to generate local matching funds, such as the 1% buyer's fee proposed in this bill, then many towns and local partners such as land trusts and water companies will not be able to participate effectively in these matching programs.

We encourage the Committee to think creatively about enabling municipalities to generate funding for priorities like open space and farmland protection and stewardship, and we hope you will strongly support this bill!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am glad to respond to any questions you may have.