

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of HB 6926. Municipalities, like Middletown, where I live, struggle to find adequate funding for open space acquisition and stewardship. HB 6926 would allow municipalities to establish, if they choose to do so, a limited conveyance fee on transfers of real estate to provide dedicated local funding for land conservation, including farmland, forests, and open space, and to fund land stewardship efforts, including in urban communities by placing a buyer's fee on the conveyance of property to help purchase open space.

Sources of funding for open space acquisition and protection in Connecticut are increasingly threatened and hard to find; and the state is also falling behind on its open space goals highlighted in the Connecticut Green Plan. In response, Audubon Connecticut has launched Project Green Space to create a "local option" to acquire, preserve and protect open space at the municipal level.

To do so, we need the state legislature to pass enabling legislation that gives Connecticut cities and towns permission to establish this fee at the local level.

This legislation does NOT require municipalities to adopt the local option—it merely *permits* them to do so if they choose. HB 6926 allows a town to collect a fee from the buyer on home purchases up to 1% of the selling price. No fee would be imposed on the seller, and exclusions would protect first time home buyers and low-income individuals. Allowable projects paid from this new funding source would be limited to land stewardship of open space and acquiring parcels of open space, parks and farmland. The town collects the funds and the local community decides which local projects are funded. In these tough fiscal times, towns need more options to protect their local lands. This is the right time to pass HB 6926.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Kleindienst
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