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Planning & Development Committee
Connecticut Legislature

RE: In support of H.B. No. 6926

To Co-Chairs Lemar, Cassano and Logan and to the Members of the Planning & Development Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify as a resident of Wilton, CT, in support of House Bill 6929, An Act Permitting Municipalities to Impose a Buyer's Fee on the Conveyance of Real Property. This enabling legislation would allow my town and other CT municipalities to enact a local ordinance that, via a small buyer's fee in residential real estate transactions, could create a community fund to purchase and care for irreplaceable parcels of open space for public benefit and education.

As a former Conservation Commissioner for my town, I was often deeply saddened to go on site walks with my fellow Commissioners across open fields and through woodlands that were very important in maintaining biodiversity, clean water and clean air, knowing that much of the soil and those natural habitats were destined to become essentially barren lawns that probably now are experienced only by small families — through their windows — as green-colored scenery. Dozens of potential bird walks and butterfly outings for the public to appreciate exemplary natural resources can never happen there, while stormwater run-off is a growing and costly problem.

The ability of my town to purchase such rare parcels currently does not exist, due to chronic budget shortfalls. These days, my town can not afford to invest in our own community and the preservation of our essential community character in the way that our residents and newcomers alike have spoken up for in town meetings for years. Outdated local paradigms of development mean that suburban sprawl continues, despite the growing appreciation for walkable town centers and smart growth.

Even now, I am dreading the appearance of bulldozers on several acres of little bluestem and other meadow grasses at 183 Ridgefield Road — a property once owned by a family keen on having the land preserved. But the town could not afford to offer the family a fair price for the land, and now, much to residents' overwhelming dismay, the historic house and barn are gone, and the beautiful meadows are probably doomed.

Please empower and enable communities across Connecticut to fund local conservation efforts and preserve the natural beauty and character of our rural, urban and suburban landscape. Open space is an important resource that defines that character of our region and should be there for generations. Please support and encourage the passage of House Bill 6926.

Thank you for your consideration.



Patrice Gillespie