



March 19, 2018

Re: Testimony in Support of **S.B. 429, An Act Concerning the Passport to the Parks** and Testimony in Opposition of **S.B. 338, An Act Concerning the use of CIA Account Funds for Combatting Invasive Species**

Dear Chairmen Kennedy, Miner, Demicco, Ranking Member Harding, and Members of the Environment Committee:

Audubon Connecticut, the state office of the National Audubon Society, is one of Connecticut's premier conservation and environmental education organizations. With four Chapters, nearly 17,000 members, supporters, and partners across the state, through land stewardship, science, education, and advocacy, we work to preserve habitat and protect bird species that are of state, national and global concern. Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the following Committee bills:

S.B. 429 (SUPPORT): Audubon Connecticut supports this bill. We are thrilled at the dedicated revenues that will be used to support the operation and maintenance of our state parks through the new program, Passport to the Parks. Consistent with the legislative intent, S.B. 429 would set up the Passport to the Parks program as a non-lapsing account rather an appropriated fund, ensuring a consistent source of funding for the program during the general budget process. A non-lapsing account ensures that the program would not be vulnerable to sweeps in the future, protecting the future of our State Parks.

S.B. 338 (OPPOSE): Audubon Connecticut opposes this bill. The Community Investment Act (CIA) is the only dedicated fund intended to support investments in Open Space, Farmland/Dairy Support, Historic Preservation and Affordable Housing. The program is an economic driver and the impacts can be seen statewide. The CIA is already operating with less funding due to years of continuous sweeps and cuts, cuts that could undermine the success of the program. Invasive species pose a serious and growing threat to our aquatic environment and bird communities. We urge the Committee to find a better solution to addressing invasive species in our state.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you.

Genese Leach, Policy Manager