

SB 427 - An Act Concerning the Public Trust Components of the State Water Plan

OPPOSE

March 13, 2018

Dear members of the Joint Committee on Environment

On behalf of Food & Water Watch and our over 20,000 supporters in Connecticut, I strongly urge you to oppose SB 427- An Act Concerning the Public Trust Components of the State Water Plan. This bill would remove public trust protections from private drinking water wells across the state. More than 322,000 Connecticut households — approximately 23 percent of the state's population — rely on private drinking water wells and deserve to have their water supplies protected under the science-based State Water Plan.

This bill is an attack on public protections for public water in the name of corporate profits for large water bottlers. The public trust doctrine puts public interests before private interests. Thus, when a resource is held in the public trust, it is more difficult for private parties to inflict harm.

Multinational water bottling companies seek to extract state groundwater, and this is not in the public's best interest. Water bottlers' pumping operations can harm the environment and natural resources that communities may rely on for local farming or residential recreation. When an aquifer is over-pumped, the even water levels of a connected surface water body can fall, potentially harming natural resources and wildlife reliant on the water.

Officials in other states have said that large-scale groundwater extraction, such as for water bottling plants, could reduce the availability of local groundwater and surface water sources to the detriment of the resources that depend on them. In fact, after a bottler began pumping groundwater from a Michigan aquifer, water flows in connected surface waters fell to the point that mud flats developed. When bottled water companies tap groundwater sources, they do not replenish what they pump out. This differentiates water bottlers from local irrigation and agricultural water users, who do return water to aquifers.

Again, I strongly urge you to oppose SB 427. Water belongs to the public and should be protected and preserved for the public.

Sincerely,

Nisha Swinton
Northeast Senior Organizer
Food & Water Watch