



## TESTIMONY REGARDING SB 957, HB 7082 AND HB 7083

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**To:** Honorable Chairs Sen. McCrory and Rep. Sanchez and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee

**From:** Lori Brown, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony related to the following bills:

SB 957, AAC The Inclusion of Computer Science Instruction in the Public School Curriculum, Programs of Teacher Preparation and In-Service Training Programs for Teachers; HB 7082, AAC The Inclusion of African-American Studies in the Public School Curriculum; and HB 7083, AAC The Inclusion of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies in the Public School Curriculum.

In 2015, Connecticut adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which include climate change as a core element of science education, beginning in middle-school. A bill raised this year in the Education Committee, HB 5011, would have taken the next step, writing the NGSS into law, and broadening the mandate to include elementary school students — but it was not raised in time by the committee. **The Connecticut League of Conservation Voters urges you to include the climate change provisions of 5011 as you make important updates to the core curriculum embodied in the three bills being heard in your committee: SB 957, HB 7082 and HB 7083 — to include climate change curriculum mandates.**

Climate change must be dealt with head on if we wish to save our planet and preserve it for future generations. However, according to a survey by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, **only 58% of Americans believe climate change is caused by human activities.** Nearly 30% of Americans don't believe in climate change at all. This knowledge gap stands in sharp contrast to the broad scientific consensus which has called for immediate action to remedy more than a century of environmental degradation. **Climate change education can help close this knowledge gap — and equip future generations with the tools to solve complex climate issues.**

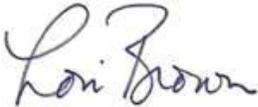
Some Connecticut towns are already demonstrating the impact climate change education can have on young children. Through the Reforest The Tropics (RTT) initiative, and after a series of classes on climate change, sixth grade students at Clark Lane Middle School in Waterford voted to plant trees in Costa Rica to offset their school's carbon dioxide emissions. Other groups of students in New London and Groton have voted to enact the same change. Overall, the RTT

program has translated children's passion for environmental stewardship into 4,000 metric tons of carbon sequestration annually. **Thoughtful students like these will be front-line leaders in the fight against climate change, and we must prepare them adequately.**

Climate change education will equip future generations with the knowledge and skills they will need to tackle climate change and the associated impacts on humans and our environment. Taking this step is an investment in the future. With this in mind, I urge you to amend the language of legislation before the Education Committee **to mandate climate change education in Connecticut's statewide curriculum.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lori Brown

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lori Brown".

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# REFOREST THE TROPICS

A UNITED NATIONS SANCTIONED CARBON DIOXIDE SEQUESTRATION PROGRAM

RTT IS A 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

ACCEPTED BY UNFCCC-AJII IN 1995 TO DEMONSTRATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TROPICAL FORESTS TO FIX AND STORE CARBON EMISSIONS

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Chair and Honorable Members of the Education Committee  
[edtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:edtestimony@cga.ct.gov)

Feb. 5, 2019

This letter is being written in support, strong support, of Christine Palm's proposal to make the teaching of climate change a mandatory topic for teaching in elementary schools in Connecticut.

Reforest The Tropics is a CT and Costa Rican-based non-profit organization with more than 20 years of experience in the field of climate change. Our research on using trees to extract CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere to mitigate climate change began in the 1960s and was formally adopted in 1995 as a UNFCCC-sanctioned applied research program. Today, we manage 80 forest projects for U.S. emitters, pasture reforestation projects on 13 Costa Rican farms. Half of our forest sponsors are in Connecticut.

We have been teaching climate change in SE CT schools on a limited scale since 1998 starting at the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and have lectured at Conn College and the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. Fourteen schools have sponsored forests in our program.

It is our opinion that teaching about climate change should have priority over other topics. Keep in mind that there will be large demonstrations of students on the streets on March 15<sup>th</sup> promoting action on climate change. And the latest book on climate change, The Uninhabitable Earth, Life After Warming, by David Wallace-Wells begins "It is worse, much worse, than you think."

Sincerely,

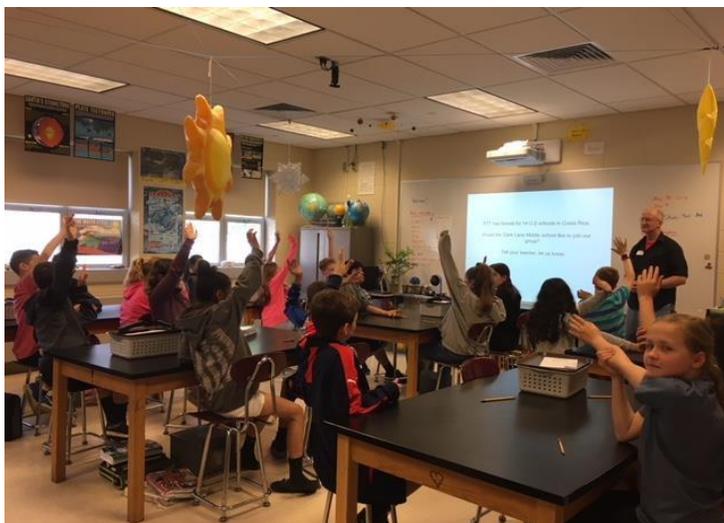
Dr. Herster Barres, RTT Director of Research and CT-resident.

Below, the William Niering Memorial 40-acre RTT Forest for Connecticut College in Costa Rica



# RTT ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT & RHODE ISLAND

Reshaping Society Towards Sustainability, June, 2018

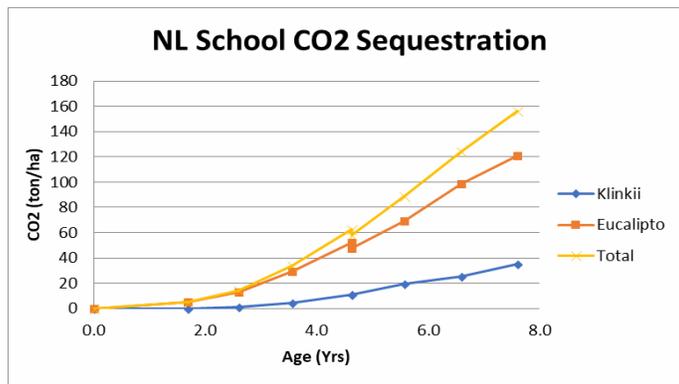


Clark Lane Students vote for a forest, May 30, 2018



By age 7.6 years, this forest has captured 156 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e/ha

**Teaching about climate change with a tropical forest.** In the photograph on the left, Clark Lane Middle School 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in Waterford, CT, participate in a 6-lesson series on climate change culminating by voting for establishing a forest in Costa Rica to offset some of their school's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Sponsored by Reforest The Tropics, a CT non-profit organization in Mystic, CT and associated donors, students not only learn theories and basic concepts of climate science through collaborative small group work, but also generate solutions to the problem and take meaningful action to begin to balance their school CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in a dedicated 2 ½-acre forest in Costa Rica. Educational entities in CT and RI participate in RTT programs.



CO<sub>2</sub>e captured in the above school forest. This program provides material for STEM teaching.

### Schools with RTT forests with dates of planting

- J. Winthrop High School 1998
- Cutler Middle School 1998
- Stonington, ME Elementary School 1998
- Connecticut College 1999 & 2000
- West Side Middle School in Groton, CT 2006
- Karen Valente, retired teacher 2007
- Hotchkiss (2 forests) 2007 & 2010
- Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (Class of '07) 2008
- New London, CT Public Schools (shown above) 2010
- Westerly, RI Middle School 2011
- NL Regional Multicultural Magnet School 2015
- Rockport, MA High School 2017
- Tower School, Marblehead, MA 2017
- Gloucester, MA High School (being planted) 2018

RTT forests are the result of more than 50 years of R&D to improve farm forests' capacity for current and future CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration. **Selected species of trees are planted in innovative mixtures can efficiently store CO<sub>2</sub> for long-term. They can also generate income for participating farmers whose pastures are reforested in partnership with schools.** Our goal is one hundred years of CO<sub>2</sub>e storage, programmed as 4 successive 25-year contracts that include funding the establishment of the farm forests and sales of verified CO<sub>2</sub> storage credits, a new exportable farm product, permanently locked into a forest.

**U.S. emitters benefit from low-cost offsets by sponsoring forests.** RTT forests can contribute to mitigating climate change and can make a significant reduction in the management of schools' CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The average cost to balance a school's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is about \$20/student year.

**Currently, RTT manages 77 dedicated forest projects (548 acres)** in 13 farms for more than 100 U.S. businesses, social organizations, families and schools. Web site: [Reforestthetropics.org](http://Reforestthetropics.org). Contact: Dr. Barres or Greg Powell, tel 860-572-8199. Feb.19, 2019.