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**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound**

***In Support of House Bill No. 5314***

**AN ACT PROHIBITING THE RELEASE OF HELIUM BALLOONS INTO THE  
ATMOSPHERE.**

**Comments on Senate Bill SB226**

**AN ACT AUTHORIZING DUAL LANDINGS IN THE STATE**

**Submitted by Bill Lucey, Long Island Soundkeeper**

**February 24, 2019**

*Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE) is a non-profit organization with over 3,000 member households and 10,000 activists statewide. CFE, its bi-state program Save the Sound, and its Soundkeeper Program protect and improve the land, air, and water of Connecticut and Long Island Sound. We use legal and scientific expertise and bring citizens together to achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations.*

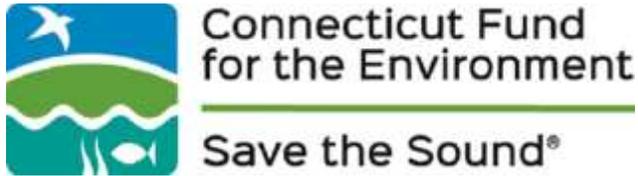
Dear Co-Chairs Senator Cohen and Representative Demicco, Vice-Chairs Reps. Gresko and Sen. Kushner, Ranking Members Rep. Harding and Sen. Miner, and members of the Environment Committee:

Connecticut Fund for the Environment and its bi-state program Save the Sound (CFE/Save the Sound) writes to ask that you support protecting wildlife health, our waterways, and Long Island Sound by passing HB 5314 out of committee.

I spend many days out patrolling Long Island Sound and pick up balloons on almost every trip. These balloons can last for years, can be ingested by marine wildlife and entangle engine intakes and wildlife alike. Just this weekend I found a pair of balloons that were entangled in a tree on my property. It is just another form of littering showing disrespect for our natural resources. Balloons can still be enjoyed tethered to a mailbox.

**Support concept of SB 226 but not as written**

The intent of this bill is admirable. If fish can be harvested in fewer trips, fisherman can have a better pick of weather windows knowing that, if fishing is good, they can reach their quotas in fewer trips increasing the efficiency of their business. Theoretically, bycatch should also be significantly reduced since a three-state quota harvest would be much more profitable. Fishermen could leave the grounds once the valuable flounder limit is reached instead of targeting less valuable species while inadvertently killing more winter flounder while doing so to put enough fish on board to make the trip profitable. These trip limits are based on spreading out the catch for marketability and the overall harvest allocation which is based on the best available science towards the goal of sustainable fishing.



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Similar efficiency efforts have occurred elsewhere such as “permit stacking” in some Alaskan salmon gillnet fisheries. In this scenario one skiff with three permit holders can tend three nets, using less gas while having a better chance of harvesting a profitable amount of fish with lower overhead. Again, the overall fishery is managed for sustainability through protecting enough fish to spawn future generations. It is important to remember that just because a more efficient harvest policy is enacted doesn’t mean that more fish will be harvested. There was some confusion over this during public testimony. As an example, a coast wide winter flounder limit is annually established by a federal commission. If the fleet goes over this limit the next year’s limit is reduced by the amount of overage.

Other sources of confusion revolve around the industry itself. Federal trip limit restrictions of 500 pounds may seem large, but they are in reality very small amounts. From personal experience, a small open skiff fishing two hand lines can catch 1000 pounds or more in a single day, and halibut fisherman could reach 500 pounds while only harvesting 10 fish. Harvest perceptions are notably difficult to explain to the consumer who buys the ever increasingly expensive end product by the pound.

Wild caught fish are an excellent source of protein and nutrients but it is difficult to run a commercial fishing business. There have been a lot of regulations imposed upon the New England fleets in the interest of rebuilding stocks, and though painful it is necessary. Nevertheless, the restrictions are challenging, so if we have an opportunity to continue rebuilding stocks while allowing a policy change to increase the efficiency of the commercial sector we should try.

Fishery management is an extremely complicated field which is why these decisions are best left to state agencies, state advisory boards and the federal fishery management councils and commissions. These entities are staffed with both technical and policy experts, multiple stakeholder groups and work in close coordination with the various industries. While not always agreeing, all parties at the table have a deep understanding of the issues.

The final component is the buy-in of all relevant enforcement agencies. There have been a number of seafood fraud crimes in recent memory and a system must be in place to monitor the extra complexity of ensuring dual or tristate landings are accurately logged.

My concern with the bill language is that it refers to state waters when it should be referring to federal waters and is, as I understand it, intentionally written in general terms to allow the agencies and councils to come up with a pilot program.

Testimony from the state indicates that there is already an effort underway to create a pilot program for 2020 and logically the fishing industry would like to see it happen for next season.



Connecticut Fund  
for the Environment

Save the Sound®

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The issue seems to be timing and I would be more in favor of allocating extra funding to CTDEEP to work with a consultant or bring on a temporary hire to focus on setting up a pilot program for next season through the regular decision making process.

Sincerely,

Bill Lucey  
Long Island Soundkeeper  
Fishable, swimmable and drinkable.  
Connecticut Fund for the Environment and its bi-state program Save the Sound