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Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Public Hearing Subject Matter	Position
H.B. 7058: AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GREENWAYS ACCOUNT.	Support
S.B. 775: AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF THE CENTRAL CONNECTICUT LOOP TRAIL.	Support

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. For nearly 125 years, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly on various State Park and Forest, trail recreation, sustainable forestry, and land conservation issues.

CFPA strongly supports H.B. 7058: An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Greenways Account, and we thank Representative Rojas for raising it to clarify that funds generated by the Greenways license plate should be spent on greenways projects rather than be diverted into the General Fund as it unfortunately has been for years.

There is certainly a precedent for doing this, and we recommend using the same model that was done successfully for the Long Island Sound license plate in 2009 in Section 14-21e of the CT General Statutes. I am not sure how much the Greenways plate currently generates, likely not very much, but part of the reason for this is the poorly kept secret that the funds that someone would spend for this vanity plate would not go to their intended purpose. Furthermore, we would recommend that the funds generated in this fashion be dedicated toward the same type of projects prioritized for bonding by DEEP's recreational trails and greenways program (Section 23-103 of the CT General Statutes). This would allow DEEP to maximize its efficiency in administering these license plate funds.

CFPA also supports S.B. 775: An Act Concerning the Creation of the Central Connecticut Loop Trail. We commend the legislators who proposed this bill for their vision to connect two popular long trails on both sides of the Connecticut River -- the Air Line Trail to the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail.

As groups like the Jonah Center have observed, only about 16 miles need to be constructed to the western terminus of the Air Line Trail in Portland to the Farmington Canal Trail in Cheshire, and the total central Connecticut Loop trail would stretch across 111 miles and connect to the commuter rail stations in Hartford and Meriden.

Major sections of this loop trail already exist in the form of the Farmington Canal Trail, Air Line Trail, Hop River Trail, and other short trail sections in various municipalities. Other sections are planned as part of the East Coast Greenway in Plainville and Bloomfield. Only about 16 miles (10 miles on-road; 6 miles off-road) need to be constructed in the 23.5 mile section from the western terminus of the Air Line Trail in Portland to the Farmington Canal Trail in Cheshire.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony, and I am glad to respond to any questions you may have.