

April 28, 2019

Dear Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

I am a director of the Harwinton Land Trust. I strongly oppose Section 1 of SB 1137 and Section 5 of SB 1138, both of which would require nonprofits, including land trusts, with "significant" savings accounts, endowments or pension funds to pay into a state "community development account" the equivalent of 25% property tax.

The Harwinton Land Trust maintains about 170 acres of open space spread over six properties in our rural town. In addition, the Trust oversees a 90 acre conservation easement. Harwinton residents truly enjoy hiking the trails and observing wildlife in the wetland and woodland habitats of our properties. And every year we enlist the help of students and counselors from the Connecticut DCF Wilderness School to work with us on projects to improve our properties. We have formed a mutually beneficial bond with the Wilderness School that is a true win-win situation. The kids learn a bit about community service and nature, and our Trust gets the help of young and willing workers.

These proposals would divert critical resources from our land trust's ability to acquire and manage open spaces and other natural resources that benefit our quality of life and local economy. They would penalize our land trust for our efforts to set aside funds to help secure our organization's long-term viability and to care for our land trust's properties and easement in perpetuity pursuant to best management practices (The Land Trust Standards & Practices). They would also undermine relationships with donors who want their donations to support land conservation and not a state tax.

The proposals would add a financial burden on our organization, threatening our ability to care for land entrusted to us for the benefit of future generations.

Please vote NO on these proposals that would tax land trusts.

Sincerely,

Steven M. Craig
Director – The Harwinton Land Trust