

Dear Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

As President of the Stamford Land Conservation Trust (SLCT), and also as President of the Stamford Museum and Nature Center (SMNC), I write to strongly protest and oppose Section 1 of SB 1137 and Section 5 of SB 1138, which together would require each of these institutions to pay, into a "State community account", a large percentage of the the property taxes we would have to pay were the properties not exempt as not-for-profit institutions.

The proposed measures would be nothing short of disastrous for these institutions, which struggle as it is to raise funds and provide benefits and services to our citizens.

### **Stamford Land Conservation Trust**

In the case of the SLCT, we get zero support from any government source, and depend wholly on generous contributors who would likely be turned away with this proposed legislation. We own and care for almost 450 acres of beautiful open space which would be subject to large taxes if not exempt. Payment of even a portion of such tax rate would quickly leave our Trust unsustainable. Our funds (which we have labored hard over many years to accumulate) would dwindle to zero in no time and make it impossible to spend the moneys necessary to care for these special properties. Further acquisitions requiring funding--such as the recent 20-acre parcel on the Mianus River which was saved from development in partnership with the Mianus River Gorge, Inc.--would become impossible.

Fairly quickly, the SLCT would sink into deficit and would have to abandon its mission, while the beautiful open space areas treasured by our citizens would deteriorate and be abused at a time when our environment yearns for care and respect.

### **Stamford Museum & Nature Center**

The SMNC owns or controls 118 acres in North Stamford. The property includes a former mansion used as our administration and exhibition area, a working farm with many structures, and a new Environmental and Physical Science Farmhouse that was just completed at a cost of several million dollars which took years and great effort to accumulate. The acreage is largely dedicated to farm operations and hiking trails. The SMNC extends services to more than 30,000 regional schoolchildren, and is in the middle of a major capital program that is expanding our regional services and capability.

The taxes that would be paid on this property were it not tax-exempt would be enormous, and the proposed legislation would add a burden that we cannot carry. City Funding is not adequate and we strive the best we can to carry out our mission with private donations and special events. The proposed legislation would be a crushing blow for our students and community who depend on and love this facility.

### **Conclusion**

Section 1 of SB 1137 and Section 5 of SB 1138 may be well-intended but will will have very serious consequences for the above institutions and similar institutions statewide. Please vote no on these proposals.

Sincerely,

Harry Day

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**President**

## **Stamford Land Conservation Trust**