

Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

I am president of the Brookfield Open Space Legacy, Inc. 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.

Brookfield Open Space Legacy, Inc. (BOSLI) is a private land trust overseeing 180 acres of wildlife preserves in northern Fairfield County. Our small group maintains these properties for public recreation and environmental/ecological education. We subsist on donations and dues to fund our operations. Currently we are engaging other community organizations to create a pollinator pathway through our town. This effort engages girl scouts, boy scouts, community teen groups and students to spread information to property owners, businesses, and municipal leaders in an effort to create sustainable habitat a along the pathway.

This proposal 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. It 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 easements in perpetuity pursuant to best management practices (The Land Trust Standards & Practices). This proposal would also undermine relationships with donors who want their donations to support land conservation and not a state tax.

Our annual budget is entirely dependent on the donations from the community. We compete for these precious donations in an era when many organizations with noble causes are seeking financial support. Volunteerism and community work is rewarding only when we can accomplish something for the good. Having our funds diminished by this legislation, which is essentially a property tax, would cut deeply into our stewardship funds and cripple our ability to do good for the community.

This proposal 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,

Louis C. Memoli

Brookfield Open Space Legacy, Inc.
Brookfield, CT 06804