

*Dear Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,*

*I am a member and volunteer for the Avalonia Land Conservancy in SE CT. I am also a steward and the chair of the Stonington Town committee for Avalonia. 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.*

*Our Land Conservancy protects over 4000 acres of natural habitat in our corner of the state. Owning land and just holding onto it is one thing. But stewardship and proper care of the land is quite another. The cost of caring for land is highly misunderstood. Our membership cannot begin to fully support the cost of properly stewarding and managing the land so that it remains healthy habitat for generations to come.*

*Our endowment is our way to be able to save dedicated donations and get return on the investments to provide stewardship funding. The generous donors who support the endowment believe that their gift will support a cause they believe in, and not be turned back into another tax.*

*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.*

*In this economic and political landscape, organizations such as Avalonia are already struggling financially to preserve open space and to manage natural habitats for future generations of people and wildlife. They are also protecting land and water resources, positively affecting air quality and improving the quality of life in our local communities. 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,*

*Beth Sullivan*

*Stonington Town Committee chair, Avalonia Land Conservancy*