

April 28, 2019

Dear Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

I am a board member and officer of the Woodbridge 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.

This proposal would divert critical resources from land trusts' ability to acquire and manage open spaces and other natural resources that benefit our quality of life and local economy. It would penalize land trusts for their efforts to set aside funds to help secure our organization's long-term viability and to care for their 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.

Open spaces and protected areas help attract businesses and tourists who love the state's rolling wooded hills. Hikers, bikers, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts of every stripe take to Connecticut's woods at every opportunity. Risking the integrity of those areas would cut at the state's core priorities by crippling land trusts' ability to acquire and maintain open spaces.

One tenet of the "smart growth" movement is that communities should strive to preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas. In addition, there is a strong link between open space preservation and the health of certain industries. Some sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, forestry and industries that rely on forest products, cannot function without access to open space. Other industries, such as tourism and outdoor recreation, are closely related to open space.

Landowners and municipalities, along with legislative leaders, must redouble their commitment to finding creative ways to protect Connecticut's open space – not undermine the entities in the forefront of conservation and preservation.

This proposal would add a financial burden on land Trusts, threatening their ability to care for land entrusted to them for the benefit of future generations.

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

Sincerely,

Cynthia Anger
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Woodbridge, CT