

Dear Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

I am a board member of the the Colchester 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.

Colchester Land Trust is a small, all-volunteer, nonprofit 501(c)3 land conservation organization. Our mission is to protect the beauty and natural diversity of our area by preserving significant land and scenic areas for present and future generations. We are dedicated to maintaining Colchester's rural character and stand for clean air and water, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and local agriculture. We have conserved more than 300 acres in our town and steward much of that. Our most ambitious project is to develop a 180-acre parcel that sits astride two Connecticut watersheds. We want to provide limited parking for the public to access this property and enjoy the trails. We expect this to become a learning opportunity for school groups and an introduction to nature for young people: those who will continue our work into the future.

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.

The proposal in these Acts would add a financial burden on our organization, threatening our ability to care for land entrusted to us for the benefit of future generations. It would also add to the record-keeping burden of our volunteers, who give so much of their time already. Please vote NO on these proposals that would tax land trusts.

Sincerely,

John Barnowski
Colchester Land Trust