



Dear Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee;

I am President of the Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve (FOHNP) and 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.

The Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve, located in the village of Niantic in East Lyme, CT, was established in 2001 as a 501(c)3 organization in order to secure funds for the purchase of land that became The Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. The acquisition of land began as a grass roots effort by a few dedicated individuals, when this pristine area, located on the Niantic River, was threatened by development. Beginning in 2001, FOHNP worked with town officials, state and federal legislators, and The Trust for Public Land to secure needed funding. As a result, \$2,840,000 was raised, and 420 acres of forest land were acquired and protected in perpetuity.

Our current mission is: To acquire the remaining undeveloped land within Oswegatchie Hills and to maintain a public nature preserve for future generations to enjoy.

Current Priorities:

1. Effectively manage the Nature Preserve
2. Prepare a plan and form a team to raise the necessary funds as opportunities arise
3. Maintain public awareness and support of the Nature Preserve
4. Develop and promote educational programs

This proposal would divert critical resources from our ability to acquire and manage open spaces and other natural resources that benefit our quality of life and local economy. It would unfairly penalize our organization's efforts to set aside funds to help secure our long-term viability and to steward and protect the properties and easements under our care in perpetuity pursuant to best management practices. This proposal would also undermine relationships with donors who want their donations to support land conservation and not a state tax. The work we do and the projects we undertake are all done by volunteers and paid for by private donations so there is no cost to the town or state. Taxing the funds that help to preserve the land and also protect the environment makes no sense at all. This proposal would only add a financial burden on our organization and threaten our ability to care for land entrusted to us for the benefit of future generations.

Please vote NO on this and any proposal that would tax land trusts.

Sincerely,

Greg Decker - President

The Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve (FOHNP)

Cc: Paul Formica  
Holly Cheeseman