



Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee Public Hearing of April 28, 2019

OPPOSE: Senate Bill No. 1137, Section 1, (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DEPOSITS IN LIEU OF TAXES; Senate Bill No. 1138, Section 5, (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY RESTORATION FUNDS.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the National Audubon Society through its affiliate state office, Audubon Connecticut. The National Audubon Society protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation.

Our conservation network extends statewide and includes more than 19,500 members, five Connecticut chapters, and many partners along the [Atlantic Flyway](#).

Through our conservation programs focused on Bird-Friendly Communities, Coasts, Climate, Advocacy, and Working Lands / Healthy Forests, we are working to preserve habitat and protect bird species that are of state, national, and global concern—like the Piping Plover, Wood Thrush, and Field Sparrow. It begins with birds, but our mission connects people to a much wider range of issues, such as preventing air and water pollution, reducing pesticide use, promoting land conservation and reducing the impact of global climate change on birds, wildlife, and people.

As a 501(c) not-for-profit entity, the National Audubon Society manages many properties in Connecticut. We make these properties available to the public so that both residents and visitors alike can enjoy birds and an open space experience. These are eco-tourism experiences where we provide natural resource and conservation education. The link below provides additional about our centers, sanctuaries, properties and programs.

<http://ct.audubon.org/about-us/centers-sanctuaries-and-chapters>

Senate Bill Nos. 1137 and 1138 create new taxes, disguised as fees, against “(a) (1) Each entity that (A) is exempt from paying property tax pursuant to Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or any subsequent corresponding internal revenue code of the United States, as amended from time to time,...” Any such entity that “(iii) maintains a pension fund, endowment fund or other significant savings fund or account, shall pay a fee annually to the Treasurer for deposit in the community development account established under subsection (d) of this section.

(2) Such fee shall be equal to twenty-five per cent of the amount of the property tax, calculated annually, that the entity would have paid on such real property at the mill rate applicable for each assessment year.”

Providing the financial stewardship necessary to keep these centers and sanctuaries open involves a decades old a social contract between not-for-profit entities and state, local and federal governments. Senate Bill No. 1137, Section 1, and Senate Bill No. 1138, Section 5, effectively ends this social contract.

The National Audubon Society relies upon the enormous generosity of our members and donors to keep our mission going. We work hard to make the most efficient use of the generous donations provided to us. Senate Bill No. 1137, Section 1, and Senate Bill No. 1138, Section 5, will place a new, huge financial burden on organizations like Audubon by forcing us to shift financial resources to municipal entities.

We believe we are good neighbors. We currently provide much more in the way of high quality and publically available open space that improves the quality of life in Connecticut

Please reject Senate Bill No. 1137, Section 1, and Senate Bill No. 1138, Section 5, and allow not-for-profit entities like the National Audubon Society to continue the existing symbiotic relationship that we share with state and local governments. The current balance is working. There is no reason to change it.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. Should you have any questions, please contact Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, Audubon Connecticut, National Audubon Society at Robert.LaFrance@Audubon.org