

Subject: Environment Committee Testimony, HB 6441, 3/8

Dear Senator Cohen, Representative Borer, and members of the Environment Committee,

I'm writing to ask that you support HB 6441 that provides municipalities with tools to fund climate adaptation and resilience projects, following the recommendations of the Governor's Council on Climate Change.

This bill is extremely important as towns try to figure out how to deal with the climate crisis. Two sections of the bill are especially important to my town and me:

Section 3 of the bill which provides municipalities with an option to establish a buyer's conveyance fee to fund land stewardship, climate resilience, and other environmental projects in our community.

In my town of Stonington, we could use these funds to support local projects including: 1) planting of trees to replace the hundreds that have died due to insect infestation; 2) expansion of community gardens, rain gardens and bio swales; 3) a whole host of climate resiliency projects as Stonington is going to be greatly impacted by sea level rise; and 4) matching contributions for grants.

Adoption of the program by towns is optional, and it costs the state nothing.

Our community should be given the opportunity to decide whether to establish this funding program.

Section 4 (and subsequent sections with changes to wording as a result of this change) of the bill adds climate resiliency powers to the existing Flood and Erosion Control Board powers. I have been chairman of the volunteer Town of Stonington Climate Change Task Force for over six years. During that time all our task force could do was to make suggestions to the town regarding climate issues. **There is currently no enabling legislation that allows municipal climate committees to act on the climate crisis.** Other existing municipal commissions or municipal staff may be able to take actions on climate issues that fall within their current authorizations, but they really don't have the time to dedicate serious effort to deal with the climate crisis.

Passage of HB6441 is vitally important to the town governments in order to enhance conservation efforts and deal with the climate crisis.

Sincerely,

Rick Newton

Mystic

Connecticut Land Conservation Council

Avalonia Land Conservancy

Town of Stonington Climate Change Task Force