

To the Environment Committee:

Re House Bill No. 6441 An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation

Dear Members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to speak in favor of this bill and thank you for all the work you are doing to improve Connecticut's environment.

I have lived in Ridgefield for more than 25 years. I am a member of the board of Audubon Connecticut. I am also a member of several environmental groups both regional and local, including the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership, the Ridgefield Action Committee for the Environment and the Ridgefield Energy Task Force. I was a long-time member of the Ridgefield Conservation Commission and was chair for ten years and was also on the board of the Land Conservancy of Ridgefield.

I point to all of my connections not to tell you who I am but to tell you what they all share, three things; one, a dedication to our environment and thus concern about climate change, two, great ideas about what needs to be done and, three, a lack of funds.

House Bill No.6441 offers much to localities to help deal with climate adaptation. Expanding the duties of the flood and erosion control board to include climate resilience allows for an easy path for communities to have a government entity given the responsibility to look at climate related issues. To expand the Green Bank funding to resiliency projects provides a pathway for financing projects. Most importantly is the conveyance fee, section 3, a pathway by which funding can flow to climate adaptation and resiliency at a local level.

Hopefully Ridgefield will adopt this option. The Conservation Commission then could embark on much needed open space forest management to encourage carbon storage and do riparian buffer work to reduce flooding. The Hudson to Housatonic could enlarge its newly introduced green corridors program into Ridgefield from neighboring Wilton with monies for tree planting. The Ridgefield Action Committee could apply monies to the robust pollinator pathway program that is ongoing in town. The Town would be able to do more robust flood control and tree planting projects.

Beyond Ridgefield, the cumulative actions of other towns would allow work on the critical problem of coastal sea rise and coastal erosion. This work would be a direct benefit not only to property and infrastructure, but birds as well by preserving the nesting habitat of seaside species.

It might be of interest that I have a cottage on Cape Cod. The town there has partaken in the Massachusetts version of this bill. I have seen over the years wonderful additions to the Town's open spaces and also to affordable housing. Although this bill

is excluding open space purchase to some towns because they lack affordable housing, it does allow the monies to be used for housing which should please those with that concern and, in the long run, allow more towns to have full use of the funds raised by this program.

Thank you for looking favorably on this bill,
Benjamin Oko, M.D. Ridgefield, Connecticut