



SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION DISTRICT

3/5/21

Dear members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comment on **HB6496 AAC Concerning Certain Soil-Related Initiatives**. The Southwest Conservation District is in **support** of this legislation, and we ask that you pass the bill, especially sections 3, 4, and 5 that deal with soil health.

The Southwest Conservation District works in our service area of 43 municipalities across Fairfield and New Haven Counties. We work on a range of conservation and natural resource issues in these municipalities. A large portion of our work is supporting agricultural producers in conjunction with Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) staff from USDA. These efforts include technical assistance with soil practices, manure storage facilities, improved irrigation practices and other project work. All of this work can be connecting to improving soil health at these farming locations.

Not only does improved soil health assist farmers and their crops and livestock, (and local gardeners too), there are additional benefits to working to enhance soil health. Healthier soils can act as a carbon sink which can cost-effectively reduce the impacts of climate change. We know this is an issue of critical importance here in Connecticut based on the level of resources and prioritization of the GC3. As a shoreline state, Connecticut is also critically impacted by the effects of sea level rise, furthering the benefit of reducing climate change impacts by reducing carbon emissions into our atmosphere.

Healthier soils also need less fertilization and are less susceptible to the forces of erosion. This leads to lower sediment and nutrient loading from stormwater runoff flowing to our rivers and streams, and eventually Long Island Sound (LIS). As one of our greatest natural resource treasures, any steps we can take to improve the water quality and health of LIS are critically important for our State.

In the end, the work done by the Conservation Districts and all of our partners isn't just protecting and improving soil health in Connecticut, it is the cascading benefits to our natural habitats and wildlife, recreational opportunities at our shoreline, and agricultural benefits for our farmers that make soil health such a critical component of conservation efforts.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit comment on this bill and we ask that you move the bill forward out of committee to vote for full passage by the House and Senate.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chris Sullivan
Executive Director
Southwest Conservation District