

**House Bill # 5296- An Act Concerning the Open Space and Watershed Land  
Acquisition Grant Program  
Public Hearing  
March 2022**

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and Members of the Environment Committee,

I am writing to ask you to support Raised House Bill No. 5296, An Act Concerning the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. This Bill is intended to increase the bond authorization for the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA) to \$10 million. In addition, I ask the committee to approve the bill with a technical correction at the end of line 5 to add “per annum” after \$10 million.

My name is Kip Kolesinskas, I’m Co-Chair of the Working Lands Alliance, and a member of the CT Council on Environmental Quality. I have spent 40+ years as a professional soil scientist and conservationist and know firsthand the importance of land conservation in protecting ecosystem functions, food security, recreational access, cultural resources, scenic beauty, and the economic activity that protected lands can provide. Sandwiched between NYC, Boston, and Providence, there will continue to be mounting development pressure on our state. At the same time, the Climate Change mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency strategies outlined in the GC-3 Phase 1 Report strongly recommends that we increase our land use planning and protect our critical green infrastructure for what they provide current and future generations (at little or no cost). Increasing our investment in the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program is a wise use of funding and allows CT to leverage increased federal funds from the USDA and other federal agencies and organizations. Many working lands projects have been partially funded using OSWA funds and are an important source of matching funds. Protecting these parcels will help mitigate emissions, help us build resiliency to the impacts of climate change, protect and improve the quality of life for our increasingly diverse population, and help strengthen our economy.

On a personal note, the OSWA program recently helped protect the Lombardo Farm in Manchester, which provides important habitat and is creating additional recreational opportunities.

Thank you for raising this bill in support of the OSWA Program and land conservation in Connecticut.

Sincerely,  
*Kipen J Kolesinskas*

Kip Kolesinskas

Co-Chair Working Lands Alliance  
Manchester, CT