Dear Environment Committee member,

I am writing to voice my support for HB 5B 5297, HB 5294, HB 5296, and SB 242. These bills are especially important to me I believe Connecticut should exhaust every last effort it can to advance environmental justice, protect land and aquatic animals from hazardous debris, protect watershed lend, and develop a game plan to restore eel grass along our state's shoreline.

The purpose of HB 5297 is to require recommendations for revisions to the state's Environmental Justice Law from the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection in consultation with the CT Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council no later than Jan 1, 2023. The report they will provide is meant to prevent the further siting of numerous affecting facilities in state-designated Environmental Justice communities.

The bill is a step in the right direction, however I ask this committee to explore the following strategies to strengthen the state's EJ Law: (1) Strengthen current EJ Law by bolstering DEEP and the Siting Council's ability to reject permits in state-identified EJ communities, (2) increase meaningful public notice and participation, (3) expand the definition of EJ to include racial, ethnic, and linguistic factors, and (4) clean up contaminated sites.

HB 5294 would prohibit the release of balloons that become a source of litter in the landscape and end up in the Sound, fouling outboards and breaking into microplastics that choke wildlife.

HB 5296 would provide funding for the open space and watershed land grant acquisition program, and I think that's important for protecting our aquifers, wildlife habitat, and public recreation opportunities.

Lastly, I'd like to iterate my support for SB 294 as it would establish a working group to develop strategies for the restoration of eel grass, an essential habitat type that has disappeared from most of its historic range in the Sound due to pollution.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment in support of a clean and healthy environment for all.

Sincerely,
Mr. Sam Slater
16 Wilderness Rd West Hartland, CT 06091-4001 s.slater16@charter.net