

Environment Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6480
AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP ON THE RESTORATION OF
Title: EEL GRASS.
Vote Date: February 17, 2023
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 1/30/2023
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL

Environment

REASONS FOR BILL:

To protect the coastline and improve air quality by the restoration of Eel Grass

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kevin Kelly, Senator:

Senator Kelly testified in strong support of the bill. Establishing a working group for the restoration of eel grass along the shoreline will develop and protect the eel grass beds. Eel grass is far more effective in eliminating CO₂, it stores twice as much carbon per square mile than trees. Planting of trees is a way to improve the air, but the sea grass stores the carbon beneath the surface as opposed to a tree in its leaves and trunk. According to the National Audubon Society seagrass provides carbon storage, feeding grounds for birds and refuge for other sea life. Without efforts to find green initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint this can be overlooked. A similar bill in 2022 carried no fiscal note and gained bi-partisan support

Alice Charamut, Executive Director, River Alliance of Connecticut:

The creation of a working group to develop strategies for the preservation and restoration of the eel grass along a state's shoreline is an important step in ensuring our shoreline is more resilient.

Nathan Frohling, Director of External Affairs, The Nature Conservancy:

The Nature's Conservancy mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Eel grass is a very important marine plant species that has concerned us for years. Establishing a working group for the restoration of eel grass can be instrumental in continuing how to best approach Eel grass restoration.

William Hyatt, Vice-Chair, Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council:

Eel grass is declining from its historic abundance due to pollution, disturbance and increasing amounts of fine sediments in nearshore waters. The creation of a work group is a welcome step in Connecticut long-term effort to restore the environmental health of Long Island Sound.

MaryEllen Mateleska, Senior Director, Mystic Aquarium:

Establishing a working group will develop the necessary strategies to preserve, restore and expand this critical habitat. Seagrass meadows provide essential foraging areas for fish and invertebrates and migratory birds.

Jason Patlis, President and CEO, The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk:

Jason Patlis testified he hoped this bill would help the Maritime Aquarium achieve its goal of 3,893 acres of eelgrass by 2035. Seagrass meadows are a critical nursery for countless marine animals. Due to many human impacts on Long Island Sound the only remaining eelgrass in the sound is found in the furthest east harbors of Connecticut.

William Lucey, Long Island Soundkeeper:

Recent estimates document less than 2,000 acres of eel grass. Included in his submitted testimony is a model showing where some of the higher potential restoration areas could be.

Patrick M. Comins, Executive Director, The Connecticut Audubon Society:

Patrick Comins submitted testimony in support of a working group to help expand current beds and establish new beds.

Eric Schultz:

As a marine ecologist I support this bill. The decades long decline in eelgrass is a regional problem and causes losses in our ecosystem.

Darcy Ahl:

Darcy Ahl submitted testimony on how the decline in eel grass is a crisis that needs to be addressed now. Good science and a strong commitment will turn this crisis around.

Lori Brown, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters:

Lori Brown submitted testimony in support of establishing a working group on the restoration of eel grass.

Over 15 people also submitted testimony in favor of the bill

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: February 21, 2023

