

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-896

AN ACT CONCERNING TREE REMOVAL ON PROPERTIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
**Title:** PROTECTION.

**Vote Date:** 3/3/2023

**Vote Action:**

**PH Date:** 1/30/2023

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Environment Committee

## **CO-SPONSOR OF BILL:**

Rep. David Michel, 146<sup>th</sup> Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To improve transparency and establish standards for the removal of trees that constitute an immediate public hazard at state parks and campgrounds.

## **Substitute Language-LCO 5221**

Changed the bill to require an annual report on tree removal and replanting in state parks by DEEP.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Environment Protection**

Opposes this bill as it will create extended park closures following storms, inhibit DEEPs ability to fight wildfires, prevent partner organizations from engaging in effective trail maintenance, and significant cost of management of our state park and campgrounds, create wasted space and resources regarding replanting, and delay their ability to address hazards to the public in a timely manner.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Paul Aresta, Executive Director, Council on Environmental Quality**

The Council Supports the concepts of SB 896 because it would improve transparency and provide a mechanism for the replanting of trees at state parks and campgrounds but believe the provision for a public hearing if any person objects the proposed removal might delay necessary work and be administratively burdensome. We suggest the CEPA process which would utilize the existing notice process and public meeting requirement

### **Alicia, Executive Director, Rivers Alliance of CT**

The Alliance Supports SB 896 with Modifications. Tree removal at Housatonic Meadows State Park exposed problems with DEEPS process in their identification process to avoid removal of healthy trees but the public hearing element of the bill should be reconsidered so that it is not unnecessarily burdensome on DEEPS resources and would impede removal of trees that are truly a hazard.

### **Ann Godwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer, Sierra Club CT**

The Sierra Club Supports SB 896. They believe the public process and transparency are extremely important.

### **Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, CT Forest & Park Association**

We Support SB 896 because trees and forests provide a wide variety of socioeconomics and ecosystem.

### **Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, Audubon Connecticut, National Audubon Society**

Audubon of Connecticut supports SB 896 but realizes will need additional funds. Proper hazardous tree removal with improved transparency can be accomplished with additional funds in each contract for public outreach and professional review by licensed arborists. Improving utilization of licensed arborists to help with proper tree removal and providing adequate public notice prior to such tree removal.

### **Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council**

CLCC supports efforts to build on last year's legislation but they feel that any new requirements would need an increase in the agency's budget and staffing.

### **Diane Hoffman**

Ms. Hoffman believes an arborist who is not otherwise employed by DEEP or any other government agency should be consulted so there is no conflict of interest of the arborist making the evaluations.

### **Myra Klockenbrink, 51 Pine Ridge Rd, Greenwich, CT**

Ms. Klockenbrink supports SB 896 because every tree counts and the bigger it is the more it counts. She believes we need to prioritize our trees and continue to build transparent practices for their removal and replacement.

### **Jamila Viandier, 12 Old Springfield Rd., Stafford Springs, CT**

SB 896 would provide real transparency to any tree removal, should it need to be done. It requires that a arborist not associated with or employed by DEEP makes the decision to remove trees.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION**

None Expressed

**Reported by: Judith Ganswindt**

**Date: March 6, 2023**