



**For the Environment Committee
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director
January 27, 2023**

Rivers Alliance was formed to fight for sound water policies at the state and federal levels, to provide education on water resources, and to advocate for any person or group striving to protect water. If you want clean, free-flowing and healthy rivers, and high-quality drinking water, Rivers Alliance is here to help.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the following raised bill before you today.

**SB 122 AAC THE REPLANTING OF TREES IN PUBLIC AREAS CLEARED BY
UTILITY COMPANIES – Support with Modifications**

There has been a significant outcry from citizens of Connecticut concerned about tree removal by utilities. As organizations and agencies in our state work toward carbon reduction and to protect resources that sequester carbon such as our forests and trees, we watch as progress is undermined by arbitrary and opaque vegetation management strategies of electric distribution companies.

SB 122 provides a solution for mitigation of tree loss and enhances cooperation with local authority. This proposal may also be incentive for utilities to adopt more flexible strategies that can be adapted to Connecticut's many landscapes. For example, a stand of trees on an island in a river gorge that will never grow tall enough to be any threat to the power lines that cross the river high overhead won't have to be removed just because they are directly beneath the lines if removal of those trees has a financial consequence.

A point of concern about the proposed bill is that trees removed are to be "of the same types as those removed." This may not be practical or advisable in every case. What if that type of tree is no longer viable due to disease or invasive pests? What if the tree is invasive? We recommend omitting the language or altering it so that beneficial, native species appropriate to local conditions are a requirement for replacement of trees that have been removed.

