

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-193
AN ACT REQUIRING LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL OF THE EVICTION OF
Title: FARMERS OPERATING ON CERTAIN STATE-OWNED PROPERTY.
Vote Date: 3/20/2024
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 3/8/2024
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee
Sen. Jan Hochadel, 13th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Connecticut farmers who lease land from the state can undergo undue pressure to vacate the land in instances where state priorities shift. This bill would seek to protect farmers from DEEP and DoAG eviction, should the General Assembly disagree with the reasoning brought forwards by the agency in question.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language applied the rules to only those lease agreements entered into by parties after the passage of the bill.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

DEEP oppose this bill because it removes their ability to adaptively manage lands for the benefit of state and federally listed species or to create resilient habitats and corridors for wildlife movement. They believe it may also conflict with federal requirements associated with the source of funds utilized to acquire or manage the lands in question.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Dr. Linda Dalessio

The testifier submitted testimony in support of the bill.

Mrs. Sandra MacGregor

The testifier submitted testimony in support of the bill.

Mrs. Leslie Frankel

The testifier submitted testimony in support of the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITON:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENTS:

Joan Nichols, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau

The Farm Bureau state Connecticut farmers often depend on lease land to support their farming operation, with leased land being especially critical for our dairy farmers who lease over 80% of the available farmland in Connecticut. They believe Connecticut should take a landscape approach to the wish management and utilization of agricultural land held by the state, as competing interests and pressure for available farmland held by the private sector is becoming acute.

CFB recommends convening the Commissioner of Agriculture and representatives and Commissioners from the other state agencies that oversee state owned agricultural land to develop memorandums of understanding so that agricultural land stays in production and remains available for Connecticut farmers.

Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council

CLCC believe that DEEP and DoAG possess the necessary expertise to evaluate the properties subject to the leasehold and make informed decisions based on the unique facts and circumstances of each case. They believe that shifting this administrative responsibility to the legislature could hinder the efficient management of state-owned properties and compromise the effectiveness of environmental restrictions and agricultural policies. They believe the Committee needs to consider alternative solutions that preserve the administrative oversight and expertise of our state agencies, whilst also safeguarding farmers' interests and promoting sustainable land management practices.

Reported by: Judy Ganswindt

Date: April 1st, 2024