



# State of Connecticut

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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**MEMBER**  
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February 28, 2024

Dear Chairs Lopes and Gresko, Ranking Members Harding and Callahan, and distinguished members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. 5216, AN ACT CONCERNING THE SAFETY CAPACITY AT GARDNER LAKE STATE PARK.

Gardner Lake is an extraordinarily beautiful 528-acre lake, bordering Salem, Bozrah, and Montville and is overseen by DEEP. Despite being a relatively small body of water, Gardner Lake's popularity has seen dramatic growth. While I am glad that more are able to appreciate the lake, rising numbers have created and emphasized safety concerns. Excessive drinking and legions of careless jet-skiers serve to threaten the safe and family-friendly atmosphere the lake once provided.

The towns surrounding Gardner Lake are attempting to address the problem but are overburdened. DEEP does not have enough EnCon officers to constantly monitor the Lake, meaning that the task often falls on local police and tow services. These services create an excessive cost to the town, which taxpayers cannot sustainably support. Our state has a duty to protect areas of natural beauty like Gardner Lake; we cannot expect the towns to solve this issue on their own.

I am happy to join Representatives Cheeseman and McCarty in supporting this important piece of legislation for the families who enjoy Gardner Lake. Water safety is paramount, and whatever additional safeguards we can put in place to keep people safe is a priority as the weather turns warmer. HB5216 addresses a serious issue, and I would deeply appreciate the committee's support in passing this legislation.

Irene Haines  
State Representative, 34th District