



**For the Environment Committee  
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director  
March 17, 2025**

*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.

**HB 6249 - AN ACT LIMITING APPEALS UNDER THE CONNECTICUT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT - Opposes**

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut strongly opposes HB 6249 which would limit the ability of individuals and groups to intervene in administrative and judicial proceedings concerning environmental protection. The proposed changes to the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) would severely restrict public participation by allowing only those who own or rent property abutting a subject site, or nonprofit organizations, to intervene. **This restriction undermines a fundamental principle of environmental stewardship: that all people have a right to protect Connecticut's natural resources, regardless of property ownership.**

Since its passage in 1971, CEPA (C.G.S. §22a-19) has served as a critical tool for protecting the public trust in our air, water, and other natural resources. The intent of the law is clear—environmental protection is not solely the responsibility of government agencies or property owners, but of all citizens. As noted in the legislative debate when CEPA was enacted, common law already allows abutting property owners to sue for nuisances caused by pollution. However, **the broader purpose of CEPA is to ensure that ALL those who care about our rivers, forests, wetlands, and air quality—can also advocate for their protection.**

The proposed legislation contradicts Connecticut's long-standing policy that it is in the public interest to provide all persons with an adequate remedy to prevent unreasonable pollution, impairment, or destruction of our shared environment. Arbitrarily restricting who can intervene will weaken environmental oversight, exclude concerned residents from critical decision-making, and jeopardize the health of our ecosystems.

Moreover, these restrictions would disproportionately harm environmental justice communities—low-income neighborhoods and communities of color that have historically borne the brunt of industrial

pollution and environmental degradation. **Many of these communities already face significant barriers to speaking up for a healthy environment, and limiting their ability to challenge harmful projects would only exacerbate existing inequities.** Under the proposed changes, residents living just beyond the arbitrary 100-foot threshold could be denied the right to intervene, even when they are directly affected by air or water pollution. This places an unfair burden on communities that are already overburdened by environmental hazards and systemic disinvestment.

At a time when environmental challenges are growing, we should be strengthening, not weakening, public participation in environmental protection. **We urge the legislature to reject these proposed changes and uphold CEPA's original intent—to ensure that every individual has the right to safeguard Connecticut's natural resources for present and future generations.**