

Senator Cohen, Representative Borer, and members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for raising HB 6441, An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation. I write to ask your support for this bill.

As a life-long conservationist by avocation, I have witnessed significant changes in my 75 years of observations of environmental impacts on the communities of native wildlife and plants in our rural town of Salem, CT, as well as on the human communities of the region. Our climate has changed. We are experiencing more frequent severe storms and greater flooding. Invasive species have threatened to replace our native populations of flora and fauna, including some invasives that are choking our forests and meadows, our lakes and rivers.

Trying to conserve our biodiversity, our agriculture, our safety and our coastal infrastructure is going to be costly. Funding needs to be provided at the local level as well at the state and federal levels. The State can't do this all alone, and neither can the feds. Section 3 of the bill enables local communities to use a conveyance fee to fund local conservation projects. It provides a critically important tool for communities that otherwise would not be able or willing to leverage adequate matching funds for climate change adaptation and resiliency.

Funding land conservation and stewardship is especially important. These projects help with adaptation to adverse impacts. More importantly, they serve as a carbon sink that diminishes the rate of climate change. Our poorest communities have less ability to deal with the increased costs and risks of heating and cooling extremes, or the dislocations from wind, fire, flood and draught that accompany our more frequently volatile weather patterns. Environmental justice demands that we act as soon as possible to save natural areas throughout the state from developments that put these downstream and downwind communities at increased risk. Section 3 enables a jump-start for action at the local level statewide.

Lastly, please note that funding stewardship provides significant local employment, since much of the adaptation work is very much hands-on, from building infrastructure to planting native species, to removing and controlling invasives, to preserving niche farming on protected agricultural land.

Bottom line: funding local stewardship funding through Section 3 greatly strengthens the bill's benefits and effectiveness for combatting and adapting to climate change, while providing significant local employment opportunities. HB 6441 deserves your strong support.

Thank you for your service.

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Co-Chair, CT League of Conservation Voters

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