



March 7, 2021

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Connecticut General Assembly, Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Environment Committee Testimony - HB 6441 – 3/8

Governor's Bill 6441: An Act Concerning Climate Change Mitigation

Dear Senator Cohen, Representative Borer, and members of the Environment Committee;

On behalf of the Kent Land Trust please accept this letter in strong support for HB 6441, which follows the recommendations of the Governor's Council on Climate Change by providing needed funding tools to municipalities to better respond to the impacts of a changing climate.

We especially support Section 3 of the bill, which provides Connecticut's communities the opportunity to establish a limited buyer's conveyance fee to generate revenue for land stewardship, climate adaptation, resilience, and other local environmental projects.

The accredited Kent Land Trust is a nonprofit conservation organization protecting over 3000 acres of significant natural land in the Town of Kent. Our properties include 10 public preserves with trails, and a long stretch of farmland along the Housatonic River which provides the critical ecosystem service of absorbing groundwater and protecting Kent's roads and residences from flooding after significant storm events. With the help of dedicated volunteers and in partnership with the Town and community organizations KLT provides exemplary stewardship of its properties including habitat restoration, ecological study, and control of invasive plants. Several members of KLT's board and staff further serve the town on its Conservation Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission.

We support HB 6441 because it would offer Kent a means of generating dedicated, sustainable, local funding to apply to our town's most pressing climate-driven needs and increase our opportunities to leverage matching support from federal, state and private sources. We have seen how towns in states including Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island have successfully used such a tool.

In Kent, funding could be used to help replace culverts that threaten the integrity of local roads and impede connectivity of wildlife habitat. It could help establish recreational trails connected to our village center, accessible to all residents including those with mobility issues. It could help tackle infestations of invasive Japanese Knotweed, Barberry, and Multiflora Rose impacting wildlife and pollinator habitat along our roads and waterbodies. Kent's residents care deeply about the environment and have made clear in their planning documents and regulations their support for protection of open space and natural resources.

The flexibility provided by the bill, which allows municipalities to choose the fee level and types of real property conveyances appropriate to their towns, shows the power of state legislation to enable local action. Adoption of the program by towns is optional and costs the state nothing. Please support HB 6441 so that Connecticut cities and towns including Kent have the opportunity to use this option to meet residents' needs driven by the changing climate.

Respectfully,

Connie A. Manes
Executive Director

