



Connecticut River Conservancy Testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 6441** An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation.

To: Honored Co-Chairs, Sen. Cohen and Rep. Gresko, and distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

I am writing on behalf of the Connecticut River Conservancy; we are an environmental nonprofit dedicated to protecting the entire Connecticut River Valley through initiatives that support clean waters, healthy habitats and thriving communities. **I am writing in support of HB6441 An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation.** This testimony is focused on Section 1, which empowers municipalities to create stormwater authorities and Section 3, which enables municipalities to fund climate resiliency through a buyer's conveyance fee program.

A changing climate will increase the concentration and quantity of pollutants entering Connecticut's waters through stormwater runoff.

As changes to our climate accelerate, Connecticut will experience an increase in intense rainfall events and, subsequently, stormwater runoff. Runoff transports pollutants from roads, farmland, sidewalks and yards into our river systems. Pollutant and nutrient loading upset the chemistry and health of aquatic ecosystems and degrades water quality. When our region experiences intense downpours, runoff can also enter pipes that transport wastewater, overwhelming the sewer systems and leading to the deposit of raw sewage and pollutants into rivers in events called combined sewer overflows. Not only will intense rain events sweep pollutants into the state's waterways, but increased frequency and severity of droughts, as experience in the summer of 2020 throughout Connecticut and New England, can concentrate pollutants due to limited dilution and thus increase the amounts of pollutants entering rivers during precipitation events. **Stormwater authorities can mitigate the impacts of stormwater runoff and protect the intrinsic, environmental, and economic value of Connecticut waters.**

HB 6441 lays the foundation for municipalities to create stormwater management plans, including stormwater abatement, public education, and leverage to funds through a real estate tax revenue to fund the authority.

The Municipal Funding Option empowers municipalities to conserve open space and waters through sustainable funding.

Municipalities are seeking ways to establish reliable funding to adapt to climate change through the conservation of open space and protection of waterbodies. The Municipal Funding Option provides an independent source of funds, equipping municipalities with the tools to prepare for and adapt to our rapidly changing climate. Critical actions could include tree plantings, invasive species removal and green infrastructure projects, all of which are integral to mitigating the impacts of the climate crisis.

The climate crisis directly and severely alters the structure and function of healthy aquatic ecosystems throughout the entire river valley, from the freshwater lakes at the source, all the way down to the estuary at the mouth of the Connecticut River. The climate crisis is inexorably linked to the functions of the Connecticut River watershed and, as such, currently does and will continue to affect Connecticut's most densely populated areas and critical habitat. As human-caused climate change alters

the health and hydrology of our rivers, it is imperative that Connecticut enact legislation to protect and sustain our ecosystems and communities. **I urge you to vote yes on HB 6441, which will allow communities in Connecticut to prepare for and adapt to a changing climate.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Kelsey J Wentling

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River Steward