



TESTIMONY **IN OPPOSITION** TO

SB 961 AAC CERTAIN SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS AND ALTERNATIVE SEWAGE TREATMENT SYSTEMS

March 3, 2021

To: Honorable Committee Co-Chairs Sen. Cassano and Rep. McCarthy-Vahey, Ranking Members Sen. Hwang and Rep. Zullo, Distinguished Members of the Planning & Development Committee

From: Lori Brown, Executive Director, CT League of Conservation Voters

On behalf of the CT League of Conservation Voters (CTLCV), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **opposition to SB 961**.

It is the latest step in the campaign to transfer authority for on-site septic systems from DEEP to DPH. This legislation gives DPH authority to approve ATS systems (Alternate Treatment Systems).

ATS are closed systems for treating wastewater. They work on the same principle as most municipal sewage treatment systems. The bacteria that convert the waste into water that is allegedly pure enough to drink are vulnerable to a variety of stresses: Caustic substances (such as certain cleaners), not enough flow, too much flow, cold, changes to pH, power outages, etc.

These systems can work with regular expert oversight. They can be benign and useful in certain situations, such as the expansion of a town center. **However, it is rare for the owner of a small system to be required to perform adequate oversight or to have the money to do so.** Small installations, such as most residential units, are generally the least likely to be well-managed. Small ATS are much more difficult to regulate.

Developers want to be able to use ATS on sites that would otherwise be unbuildable (on steep, rocky slopes, close to wetland and wells, etc.) That policy would override wetlands law, because there is no demonstrable harm to wetlands if the system works as advertised and is discharging potable quality water. **This bill and others like it would open thousands of acres of sensitive land to development.**

DEEP has repeatedly voiced concern about similar proposed legislation. By statute, DPH is supposed to develop a regulatory program before it takes on any more ATS, but this legislation could potentially override that requirement.

We urge lawmakers to REJECT SB 961.

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