

# Environment Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-924

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STAFFING AND RESOURCES OF THE  
**Title:** DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

**Vote Date:** 3/29/2021

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/19/2021

**File No.:**

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### **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.

### **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To evaluate the number of staffing positions at the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) based upon two criteria: (1) the accounting of staffing positions paid from Passport to the Parks revenue, (2) assessment of impending agency staff requirements and the impact on DEEP.

### **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

#### **Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection**

The Appropriations Committee has requests has requested an accounting of Passport to the Parks, expenditures including staff resources. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is expecting many retirements during FY22. Staff do not have to indicate their intention to retire about 90 days before. DEEP does not have an exact number of retirements and the associated impact on program. DEEP is aware of the impact and working to mitigate the impact of the retirements.

### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

#### **Patrick M. Comins, Executive Director, CT Audubon Society**

CT Audubon Society is concerned with recent and impending retirements. The Wildlife Division is suffering due to retirements and positions not re-staffed. Lack of experienced staff leads to the lack of experienced leadership. Analysis of the Passport to the Parks program

provides little insight into the problem of recent and pending retirements. CT Audubon Society recommends adequate funding for review and analysis of all levels of staffing across DEEP with impending and recent retirements. The importance of natural resources and recreation add billions to the state's economy. Investment in DEEP makes sense to take advantages for the ecology and economy.

**Katherine M. Fiedler, Staff Attorney, Save the Sound**

Near term retirements and budget cuts accelerates the strain on DEEP's resources impact its ability for consistent enforcement of environmental laws. Enforcement requires skills, acquired expertise and relationships for effectiveness and efficiency. Roles for enforcement requires people.

**William Hyatt, Vice-Chair, Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council**

The Fisheries Advisory Council (FAC) requests the legislature require the impact of retirements on the function and operation of DEEP. The loss of institutional knowledge created by the 2017 budget deal, 30% of staff are likely to retire. DEEP is already understaffed and called upon to do more with less. Maintaining fish and wildlife populations is dependent upon execution of environmental laws and programs with efficiency. Efficiency and effectiveness are entirely dependent upon a viable Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

**Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council**

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) partners closely with DEEP's Land Acquisition and Management office and respect the challenges they deal with implementation of core programs for state and local conservation efforts. CLCC asked the Appropriations Committee last month to assess how DEEP will uphold enforcement and other programs. CLCC supports the report to ensure DEEP has adequate resources, CLCC feels it is not feasible for DEEP's staff to undertake this report without adequate funding dedicated to this purpose.

**Matthew Perry, President, American Society of Landscape Architects**

CT American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) chapter is an organization of approximately 300 professionals. DEEP provides members with services to include review of proposed development projects, environment and data mapping, and administration of recreational resources. ASLA is concerned DEEP will not be able to provide adequate resources due to staff retirements and budget cuts. These resources will impact the work ASLA members do, increasing time for permit requirements, developers to do the project work and an increase in cost. Funds for DEEP staff, facilities and recreational sites offer superior value for the "bottom line of environmental, equity and economic impact".

*The Environment Committee received more than 5 additional testimonials in support of SB924.*

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None

**Reported by: Steve Smith**

**Date: 4/7/2021**