

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5400

AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF STONE WALLS IN THE

Title: STATE.

Vote Date: March 10, 2023

Vote Action: JFS Language

PH Date: 2/15/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To preserve the integrity of the stone walls in the state of Connecticut

JFS LANGUAGE:

Reduce the potential prison sentence to 6 months; authorized restitution in connection with criminal penalty; authorized civil suit with certain damages; defined stone wall.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns:

Betsy Gara and COST support prohibiting people from dismantling a stone wall without the written authorization of the owner.

Samuel S. Gold, Executive Director, Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments:

Stone walls are an integral part of many towns' rural heritage and are important features in many National Registry of Historic Places designations in Connecticut.

Amy Blaymore Patterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council:

On behalf of CLCC the importance of stone walls and land trusts. WE also support imposing fines and liabilities for damaging or dismantling a stone wall without written authorization from the owner.

John Filchak, Executive Director, Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments:

Our stone walls along roadways, and framing the landscape are fundamental to the rural character of our state.

Douglas Schwartz:

Mr. Schwartz testified the bill is long overdue but there areas of concern in the testimony such as: failing to cover intentional damage, overlaps other statues, does not cover cost of replacement and no criminal penalties.

Debbie Langdon, EH P-Z River Cog RPC Gateway:

Ms. Langdon is concerned for a multifamily development and commercial buildings being built near her and the stone walls on the property.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Francis R. Pickering, Executive Director, Western Connecticut Council of Governments:

The current language is not clear whether the bill applies to freestanding colonial farm stone walls, or all walls made of stone. Please consider clarifying the definition of a stone wall for the purpose of this bill.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Council, American Civil Liberties of Connecticut:

The criminal penalties are outrageously disproportionate, and the committee should consider a bill to address the preservation and restoration of Connecticut's stone walls.

Sandra Childress:

The title is too broad and there is nothing to prevent an owner from removing a stone wall on his or her property.

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: March 13, 2023