

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6813

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEABIRD AND

**Title:** SHOREBIRD PROTECTION PROGRAM.

**Vote Date:** March 24, 2023

**Vote Action:** JF to the floor

**PH Date:** 3/10/2023

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Environment Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To grant designation of authority for seabird and shorebird areas along the Connecticut coast.

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

None expressed

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

### **Nancy James:**

As CT Audubon Osprey Steward volunteer for 8 years the disregard people have for restricted areas. Some with dogs and children lift ropes and even plastic fencing to enter the restricted areas especially in Harkness Memorial State Park. Much more needs to be done on behalf of wildlife and the protection of their homes including fining offenders and more staffing. Signs need to be in multiple languages.

### **Madison Thomas-Ferguson, Great Meadows Salt Marsh Steward:**

As a Marsh Steward I spend my days plant various plants, bird walks and listening from others on climate and environmental advocacy. As part of our program, we lead tours for organizations and school groups to share and teach others about our wondrous environment. The bill greatly improves the lives of bird wildlife and their habitats in Connecticut.

**Dennis Riordan, President, Menunkatuck Audubon Society:**

Mr. Riordan testified how to protect birds during their breeding DEEP and partners erect fencing and signage around nesting sites. Unfortunately, beachgoers and their dogs encroach upon the nesting sites causing frightened parents to abandon their nest and fragile eggs being crushed. To protect these shorebirds and seabirds we request that a bill be raised to make it an infraction for any person to enter a properly identified seabird and shorebird protection area.

**MaryEllen Mateleska, Senior Director of Education & Conservation, Mystic Aquarium:**

Mystic Aquarium partners with community organizations to monitor, protect and conserve seabird and shorebird populations and habitat. Beachgoers ignore, accidentally and intentionally defined areas with actively nesting bird pairs and newly fledged chicks. We need to establish an enforceable seabird and shorebird protection program.

**Bill Lucey, Long Island Soundkeeper:**

Mr. Lucey testified that part of his duties is to circumnavigate the coastline of Long Island Sound and how crowded they are in areas that were once dominated by migrating and nesting shorebirds. The majority of people respect nesting areas but there are that don't care and disturb the birds and kill chicks, crush eggs and displace adults.

**Paul Aresta, Executive Director, Council on Environmental Quality:**

Mr. Aresta testified on behalf of their nine-member board in support of the bill. The bill will protect areas and reduce of seabirds and shorebirds.

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

We must do more to protect our shorebirds and wildlife that live in these fragile habitats. While DEEP tries to protect nesting areas the lack of enforcement due to staffing constraints and infraction is the simplest way to increase awareness and help protect nesting birds along our coasts.

**Jessica Canizares, Coastal Restoration, The Nature Conservancy:**

The call to establish a Seabird and Shorebird Protection Program builds of the collective work by the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds. This organization and others can leverage the passage of this bill to continue to build local skills, knowledge and the capacity for community-based science and conservation. We encourage if passed decision makers create opportunities for community members to actively participate in the program.

**Scott Kruitbosch:**

Mr. Kruitbosch testified about the problems encountered throughout the state with municipalities and landowners have their own beach regulations and this creates a conflict for nesting sites. Enforcement of existing ordinances has been a challenge as it is difficult to apply current regulations. Making it possible to issue infractions will help protect waterbirds along Connecticut's coast while upholding existing laws.

**Patrick Comins, Executive Director, The Connecticut Audubon Society:**

This legislation will help to clarify that municipal law enforcement, and the state Environmental Conservation police have the jurisdiction to enforce existing rules.

**Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, CT National Audubon Society:**

In order to protect shorebirds and seabirds we request a bill that would make it an infraction for any person to enter a properly identified seabird and shorebird protection. We also request that there be an infraction to not allow any pet or other animal under a person's control not to get within 100 feet or to operate any vehicle or bicycle closer than 100 feet of the protected area.

**Craig Repasz, Conservation Committee, Connecticut Ornithological Association:**

Mr. Repasz as to the lack of clarity on jurisdiction and enforcement on entrances to prohibited shorebird nesting areas. This legislation clarifies that municipal law enforcement and state Environmental Conservation police would have the jurisdiction to enforce these laws.

**Twenty-five people also submitted testimony in support of the bill.**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed

**Reported by: Pamela Bianca**

**Date: March 21, 2023**