

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony on House Bill No. 6756
Planning and Development Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
February 15, 2019

Co-Chairs McCarthy Vahey and Cassano, Vice-Chairs Baker and Bradley, Ranking Members Champagne and Zawitowski, and members of the Planning and Development Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in support of **House Bill No. 6756, An Act Concerning Open Space Preservation In Cluster Developments**. (HB 6756) I regret that I was unable to participate in the public hearing on February 13.

As the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its 137+/- land trusts, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) advocates for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the land conservation community in Connecticut.

Generally speaking, cluster development is a subdivision design strategy which groups houses in one portion of a development while preserving the balance of the site for recreation, open space, and/or protection of environmentally sensitive areas. While not taking a position regarding the efficacy of cluster developments as a zoning tool for all municipalities, we support its underlying purpose to promote natural resource protection. Among the benefits of cluster development are reduced fragmentation of important habitat, protection of prime agricultural lands, reduction in non-point source pollution, and enhanced buffers for wetlands and watercourses.

Consistent with these underlying goals, HB 6756 would ensure that existing wetland and watercourse areas located in a proposed cluster development are not included in the calculation of open space percentage allocation for the purpose of determining eligibility for certain incentives. Simply put, if enacted, HB 6756 would result in the preservation of additional land as part of the cluster development -- an outcome we strongly support.

We suggest the following clarifications: (1) "certain incentives" be defined; and (2) language be added to affirm that the removal of wetlands/watercourses from the calculation of open space is not intended to affect the protected status such resources have under existing Connecticut General Statutes and local regulations.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments.

