



March 18, 2019

To: Sen. Christine Cohen, Co-Chair Environment Committee
Rep. Mike Demicco, Co-Chair Environment Committee
Environment Committee Members

Re: **HB 5254 *An Act Establishing A Pilot Program Authorizing Municipalities To Impose A Buyer's Conveyance Fee On Real Property To Fund The Purchase And Stewardship Of Open Space***

The Greenwich Tree Conservancy is writing **in support of HB 5254 *An Act Establishing A Pilot Program Authorizing Municipalities To Impose A Buyer's Conveyance Fee On Real Property To Fund The Purchase And Stewardship Of Open Space.***

The bill is enabling legislation and does not require any action. What it does, is allow municipalities, **by a positive vote of their legislative body, to impose a conveyance fee on buyers of real property.** The rate would not be more than one percent (1%) of the amount paid by the buyer in excess of \$150,000, an exemption which will help first-time and low-income buyers. These fees would provide a source of funding for the preservation and stewardship of lands including water supply lands, open space and forest land. Also, the funding stream could be used to leverage other sources of funding from state, federal or nonprofit partners.

Currently, communities are unable to explore this source of funding because the state does not permit municipalities to establish conveyance fees. Additionally, as both the State and local levels are feeling significant and competing demands on tight budgets, **this would allow communities to assess and debate whether this source of funding should be implemented for preservation and stewardship.**

In Connecticut, we know that most land use planning is done at the local level. We also know that public/private partnerships are keys to successful land protection efforts. The ability to employ a conveyance fee, should they so choose, will provide municipalities with funding needed to better leverage private, state, and federal dollars, resulting in timely implementation of their open space/community resiliency plans.

The Greenwich Tree Conservancy believes that municipalities should be given the option to debate this source of funding and its use for land preservation and stewardship.

We urge your support.

Sincerely,

JoAnn Messina, Greenwich, CT
Executive Director of the Greenwich Tree Conservancy