



February 23, 2022

Connecticut General Assembly
Energy and Technology Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3900
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Testimony in Support with Modification of HB 5116 AN ACT REQUIRING THE CREATION OF UTILITY COMPANY TREE PLANTING FUNDS.

Dear Senator Needleman, Representative Arconti and all members of the Energy and Technology Committee,

The Greenwich Tree Conservancy (GTC) is a non-profit organization of over 1000 supporters whose mission is to preserve and enhance Greenwich's urban forest to benefit the community, its health, and its quality of life.

We support the intent of **HB 5116** recently introduced. Utility companies should be required to invest in planting as part of their vegetation management efforts, not simply clearcutting which diminishes environmental benefits in these communities.

Requiring utility companies to create and administer a fund to distribute money to municipalities for tree planting and restoration is critically important. However, \$15,000 in many municipalities may not be sufficient, as there are some municipalities where the impact is greater. Specifically, along the transportation corridors, more remediation is necessary. The State Vegetation Management Task Force, of which I was a member, recommended having 1.5% of utility vegetation management budgets be dedicated to this effort which seems more appropriate.

There has been much discussion of "right tree, right place" planting and many municipalities are planting following this doctrine. Utility companies should be directed to collaborate with municipalities to do the same so replanting can be done at the site of removed trees. Although enhancing the tree canopy is always a benefit, planting at the "scene of the crime" corrects the deficiency where it is most needed.

We thank you for introducing this bill to require the utility companies to replace, for the benefit of Connecticut communities, the tree canopy they have removed.

Thank you,
JoAnn Messina, Executive Director, The Greenwich Tree Conservancy
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