



To the Editor:

The State General Assembly has recently submitted several tree bills, two of them speak specifically to tree issues we have been experiencing here in Greenwich. Our tree canopy is being reduced by the enhanced tree trimming of Eversource as well as the massive tree removals of CT DOT along our transportation corridors.

The pace of this destructive practice appears to be increasing at the same time as stronger storms are creating more dramatic flooding and the resulting erosion. This cutting also results in the creation of heat islands throughout town and other unanticipated outcomes that negatively affect our neighborhoods.

Eversource speaks about hardening their infrastructure, yet their practices appear to focus solely on removal and “enhanced” trimming of our trees and not on equipment upgrades or undergrounding of wires in municipal areas. They recently issued a press release stating that 140 miles of electric lines in Greenwich would see trees being “trimmed” or removed, the most in the state. As town tree canopies are weakened by aggressive trimming the trees become more vulnerable to damage from strong storms. HB 5636 will address vegetation management by utilities by requiring a permit from DEEP for pruning, require a licensed arborist to agree with the assessment of the health of the tree, require stump removal and replacement of trees removed from private property and establish fines when they do not comply with such provisions.

Additionally, the clear cutting by CT DOT along I-95 and the Metro North right-of-way that includes easements provided to Eversource have removed sound buffers that are critical to adjacent neighborhoods, have decimated habitat for songbirds and pollinators, and left behind wide open areas for invasive plants to take over. Their management policy is to apply pesticides, in many cases directly adjacent to homes and schools with

young children. This creates a vicious cycle which would not have occurred if a properly managed tree canopy had remained.

HB5506 will establish guidelines to govern vegetation along state highways by employing a certified arborist to approve tree removals, it will require annual reporting of the amount of money spent on tree removals during the previous year along with a schedule of work to be performed four weeks prior to start. The tree warden will receive this notification as well as a concise planting plan of replacement trees where trees are to be removed.

Representatives Meskers, Arzeno and Khanna are co-sponsoring these bills. We ask you to write to them expressing your support and the importance of these bills. Please also write to Senator Fazio asking him to co-sponsor these bills in the Senate. Now is the time to stop the practice of clearcutting trees by Eversource and CT DOT.

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