

7/31/23

Dear Governor Lamont,

We are writing to express our support and appreciation for PURA's Chair, Marissa Gillett. Commissioner Gillett is bravely leading the efforts in Connecticut to hold our utility companies responsible and accountable. Our public utilities have an outsized political voice, and we applaud her work in holding them responsible for their work. She has worked to ensure the EDCs provide the appropriate services in industries they monopolize.

In light of the climate crisis, Marissa Gillett is exactly who we need now in Connecticut, and we are thankful you re-appointed her to this critical position. Please continue to give her your support, along with the tools and staff needed so that she can continue to analyze the utility companies' actions and hold them accountable for their practices. This includes appointing other commissioners who will support and cooperate with her to accomplish this important work.

Chair Gillett has highlighted the legitimate concerns of CT residents and has made decisions to protect our treescape. She has worked to protect our electric grid in a balanced and appropriate manner both by levying fines against Eversource for their poor response to storm Isaias and through protecting our urban tree canopies by ruling that utilities can only remove the minimum amount necessary from trees to reduce threats to wires.

Her leadership addressed the issues raised by The United Illuminating Company (UI) wrongly using TRM (Targeted Risk Management). UI was using TRM to expand the direct contact exception in the law by trying to institute it as their daily practice to justify tree removal without seeking tree permits from local tree wardens and proper notification to abutting property owners as is required in long-standing state statutes. We are also thankful for the work Chair Gillett did by requiring UI to fulfill their obligation to provide assistance to residents with vegetation management questions.

The decision disallowing Aquarion's rate increase was an astute assessment of what the water company provided and the amount they should be allowed to charge. It was not the rubber stamp approval of the past but a thorough review using legal and regulatory information to come to the best, logical decision.

Looking forward, PURA is considering both Performance-Based Regulations (PBR), considered by regulators to be the best means of managing utilities, and undergrounding lines to ensure resiliency during this time of more frequent and more powerful storms. Connecticut needs to demonstrate that it is a smart, forward-thinking state regarding utility issues. We must devote ourselves to making long-term rather than short-term decisions. We must act boldly for the good of us all. Marissa Gillett has been doing that since her first day in office.

As a group of concerned, informed and active citizens in our communities throughout Connecticut, we are deeply worried about the world we are leaving for next generations and thankful that Marissa Gillett is the Chair of our PURA. She is a beacon of hope that Connecticut can become more resilient while maintaining our essential tree canopy.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

JoAnn Messina, Ex Dir. Greenwich Tree Conservancy

Elizabeth Hopley, Board of Directors, Greenwich Tree Conservancy

Francia Alvarez - Greenwich Tree Conservancy Board, Advocacy Chair

Diane Hoffman, Hamden Alliance for Trees

Ralph Jones, Hamden Alliance for Trees

Peter Spain, Bridgeport, CT

Mary Hogue, Fairfield Forestry Committee

Juliet Cain, Darien Pollinator Pathway

Natalie Tallis, Darien

Laurie Heiss, Redding Tree Conservancy

Janice Rotchstein, Co-founder, Redding (CT) Tree Conservancy

Leslie McCarthy, Garden Club of Darien, Darien Green Team

Shirley McCarthy, MD, PhD Branford Community Forest Commission, Branford Clean Energy Ad Hoc Committee

Pat Sabosik, Hamden

Amy Harned, Darien

Molly LeVan, North Haven

Henry Dynia, Hamden

Mary-Michelle U. Hirschhoff, Bethany