



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Peter Hearn  
Executive Director

March 22, 2021

Co-chairs Fonfara and Scanlon, Ranking Members Martin and Cheeseman, and other distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Re: SB [887](#) - An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and Other Purposes.

Honorable members,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) supports SB 887. There are many worthwhile purposes to which the proposed bonding would be applied. For the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), those purposes include important measures to conserve energy and reduce emissions in State buildings, expand charging infrastructure to support charging state-owned or leased electric vehicles, reducing wasteful water and energy use in State buildings and making State parks more accessible for the disabled.

Of particular need is the bonding for open space and recreation. One of the Council's responsibilities is to produce the official report, [Environmental Quality in Connecticut](#), on the status of the State's environment. Among the measures reported on, is the progress made towards achieving the statutory goal ([CGS 23-8](#)), "(b) Twenty-one per cent of the state's land area shall be held as open space land. The goal of the state's open space acquisition program shall be to acquire land such that ten per cent of the state's land area is held by the state as open space land and not less than eleven per cent of the state's land area is held by municipalities, water companies or nonprofit land conservation organizations as open space land...". DEEP provides matching grants through its "[Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program](#)" to assist municipalities, and other land conservation entities to acquire and preserve open space.

Though land protected through this program in 2020 exceeded what was preserved in 2019, the ten-year trend of acres acquired annually is declining. The Council projects that the State's preservation goal will not be met at the current rate of preservation. If the trend is to be reversed, the bonding that is included in the Governor's proposed budget for this program and for DEEP's [Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program](#) will be essential.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Peter Hearn  
Executive Director