



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Paul Aresta
Executive Director

January 29, 2023

Re: House Bill 5009 - An Act Concerning the Public Safety Capacity of State Parks

Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Lopes and Rep. Gresko, Vice Chairs Sen. Hochadel and Rep. Palm, Ranking Members Sen. Harding and Rep. Callahan, Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) is a nine-member board that works independently of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to assess the condition of Connecticut's environment and report its findings annually to the Governor; recommend actions to improve state environmental programs; advise other state agencies on the environmental impacts of proposed projects; and investigate citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws.

The Council supports the concept of the proposed bill to enhance public safety at Connecticut's state parks. It is the Council's understanding that admittance to the state parks is sometimes limited because of constraints with the physical infrastructure (i.e., parking and restrooms), staffing, safety and other factors. Visitations to Connecticut's state parks have increased dramatically since the establishment of the Passport to the Parks Program in 2018. Consequently, the Council recommends that additional resources be allocated to DEEP to enhance the physical infrastructure within the parks and increase the number of filled positions within the Parks Division and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation so that more of Connecticut's residents can safely enjoy the recreational opportunities afforded by Connecticut's 100+ state's parks.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Paul Aresta,
Executive Director