



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Executive Director

February 20, 2024

Re: House Bill 5170 - An Act Concerning Extensions of Time for Certain Municipal Commission, Board and Agency Decisions and Training for Inland Wetlands Agencies.

Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Rahman and Rep. Kavros DeGraw, Vice Chairs Sen. Needleman and Rep. Chafee, Ranking Members Sen. Fazio and Rep. Zullo, Distinguished Members of the Planning and Development 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 provisions of House Bill 5170 that would require staff and each member of an inland wetlands agency to complete the Municipal Inland Wetlands Agency Comprehensive Training Program¹ within one year of such member's election or appointment or such staff person's hiring, and at least once every four years thereafter. The existing online training program for wetland agencies' staff and members, municipal officials, and interested parties has been well received and provides instruction and guidance on the provisions of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act and the protection of wetland resources. As noted in the Council's 2008 special report, *Swamped*², training of inland wetland agency commissioners and staff members was associated with the alteration of fewer wetland acres for each permit granted.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Paul Aresta,
Executive Director

¹ CT DEEP Municipal Inland Wetlands Agency Comprehensive Training Program; https://clear.uconn.edu/training/ct-deep-training-certificate-courses/deep_iwa_training/

² Council on Environmental Quality, <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/CEQ/SWAMPEDwithlinkspdf.pdf>