



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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March 3, 2026

Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Flexer and Rep. Blumenthal, Vice Chairs Rep. Morrin Bello, Rep. Osborne and Sen. Honig, Ranking Members Sen. Sampson and Rep. Mastrofrancesco, Distinguished Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee.

Re: **SUPPORT FOR SJR37** - Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution Concerning Environmental Rights

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

The Council cannot overstate its **SUPPORT** for the proposed amendment to the State's Constitution. It is fundamental to the welfare of all Connecticut residents that *"Each person shall have an individual right to clean and healthy air, water, soil and ecosystems, a clean and healthy environment and a safe and stable climate for the benefit of public health, safety and the general welfare, and that the state shall protect these rights equitably for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, gender, socioeconomic status or geography."*

This amendment would empower citizens to act as private attorneys general to protect a basic human right to a clean environment, which was the original purpose of the Environmental Protection Act and the formation of the Council itself in the early 1970's. Since that time, standing to initiate legal action has been eroded, making it ever more difficult for citizens to protect natural resources where government, commercial and industrial interests fail to do so.

The Council notes that the proposed amendment is consistent with the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act, which provides that *"there is a public trust in the air, water and other natural resources of the state of Connecticut and that each person is entitled to the protection, preservation and enhancement of the same"* and that *"it is in the public interest to provide all persons with an adequate remedy to protect the air, water and other natural resources from unreasonable pollution, impairment or destruction"*.¹

The Council urges the legislature to **PASS** this measure on to the voters of Connecticut for their consideration.

Sincerely,

Keith R Ainsworth

Keith R Ainsworth, Esq.
Acting Chairman

¹ Connecticut General Statutes, Sec. 22a-15. Declaration of policy; https://www.cga.ct.gov/2019/pub/chap_439.htm#sec_22a-15
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