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Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Public Hearing Subject Matter	Position
<b>Multiple Proposed Conveyances of State Lands (SBs 466, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492): ACTS CONCERNING THE CONVEYANCE OF 6 PARCELS OF STATE LAND.</b>	Opposed

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. For over 125 years, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly on various State Park and Forest, trail recreation, sustainable forestry, and land conservation issues.

For several years, CFPA has been a leading advocate for transparency in the public lands conveyance process. The overwhelming support for Question #2 at the ballot box in November, 2018 suggests that ~85% of voters strongly agree that 1) public input before public lands are conveyed by the General Assembly is critical; and 2) State Parks, Forests, or state-owned farmlands should be held to a higher standard with a supermajority vote.

We thank you for bringing these bills forward individually and for holding a public hearing as required in the state constitution, but **we are opposed to all of these bills in the absence of having an opportunity to review the conveyance applications in order to gain a full understanding of what is actually being proposed.** We request an additional public hearing after that information is made available to allow for substantive public input.

We recommend that you consider the following criteria when evaluating conveyances:

1. **Is there a significant public benefit?** It is a significant action for the General Assembly to give, sell, or trade lands -- that were acquired for the benefit of the entire public -- to a local or private interest.
2. **Did the entity proposing the conveyance meet with the State agency first?** There is a public process that entities and the state can utilize to address surplus public lands that requires no legislative action, or in some cases a proponent for a conveyance and the state may agree that using the legislative process can be done collaboratively to enhance efficiency. In either instance, the process should start with communications between an entity and the relevant state agency.
3. **Will the State be made financially whole if a conveyance is approved?** Typically, this would involve consideration of fair market value in addition to administrative costs associated with a transaction.
4. **Is the future use of the property clearly stated?** As part of the transparency you are trying to ensure, it is important to specify what the future use of the conveyed property should be.
5. **Will the property revert to the state if the future use of the property isn't followed?** A "reverter clause" is an important and fairly standard element of conveyance bills to ensure that the purpose of the conveyance is being faithfully fulfilled, and that there is not a material change in intended use or ownership.
6. **Is the State Properties Review Board involved as a final step?** Review by the SPRB helps ensure that conveyances are in compliance with State laws, regulations and procedures.

Again, in the absence of complete information for us to consider, our initial review of each of the bills on today's agenda follows:

**SB 466**

This bill would convey 5.3 acres of Department of Transportation land to the town of Rocky Hill.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evaluation/Notes</b>
Significant public benefit?	Unknown
Meeting with State Agency first?	Unknown
Financial consideration for State?	Town would pay fair market value and administrative costs
Clear purpose for future use of property?	Unknown
Reverter clause?	No
State Properties Review Board process?	Yes

**SB 488**

This bill would amend a prior conveyance authorizing transfer of 50.29 acres of DCF land to the town of Hamden by extending the deadline for the conveyance to occur.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evaluation/Notes</b>
Significant public benefit?	Unknown
Meeting with State Agency first?	Unknown
Financial consideration for State?	\$1.873 million. Not clear whether that represents fair market value.
Clear purpose for future use of property?	Not in bill, but I believe it was referenced in testimony in 2019.
Reverter clause?	Yes, with timeline extended to June 30, 2023.
State Properties Review Board process?	Yes

**SB 489**

This bill would convey 2 acres of Department of Corrections land to the town of Cheshire for regional health district that would also house DEMHS emergency support and public health medical services.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evaluation/Notes</b>
Significant public benefit?	Seems to have public benefit but would like full context.
Meeting with State Agency first?	Unknown
Financial consideration for State?	No fair market value consideration, only administrative costs
Clear purpose for future use of property?	Yes
Reverter clause?	Yes
State Properties Review Board process?	Yes

**SB 490**

This bill would convey 3.26 acres of Department of Corrections land to the town of Cheshire for use as a school bus depot.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evaluation/Notes</b>
Significant public benefit?	Local benefit, but public benefit unclear. Would like to know why this is not a continuation of lease arrangement in place since 2014.
Meeting with State Agency first?	Unknown
Financial consideration for State?	No fair market value consideration, only administrative costs
Clear purpose for future use of property?	Yes
Reverter clause?	Yes
State Properties Review Board process?	Yes

**SB 491**

This bill would convey .0091 acres of DEEP State Park land to St Bridget Church. It appears that the metes and bounds legal description in this bill may incorporate significantly more acreage than .0091 acres. DEEP land conveyances require a supermajority vote.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evaluation/Notes</b>
Significant public benefit?	Conveyance to private entity with unknown public benefit
Meeting with State Agency first?	Unknown
Financial consideration for State?	Yes. Fair market value and administrative costs
Clear purpose for future use of property?	Unknown. Additional concern with a private entity.
Reverter clause?	No. With a private entity, conditions around use, re-sale, and any potential changes in intended use are particularly important to clarify.
State Properties Review Board process?	Yes

**SB 492**

This bill would convey 0.69 acres of Department of Administrative Services land to the city of Torrington for municipal purposes.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evaluation/Notes</b>
Significant public benefit?	Unknown
Meeting with State Agency first?	Unknown
Financial consideration for State?	Conveyance proposed for only \$1 and administrative costs
Clear purpose for future use of property?	“Municipal purposes” which is very broad
Reverter clause?	Yes, but would only apply for 25 years and then release all restrictions.
State Properties Review Board process?	Yes

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. I am glad to answer any questions you may have.