



TESTIMONY **IN SUPPORT** OF  
SB 965 AN ACT PROVIDING FUNDING FOR THE REMOVAL OF HAZARDOUS OR  
DEAD TREES BY MUNICIPALITIES.

February 14, 2023

**To:** 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

**From:** Lori Brown, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

On behalf of CTLCV, thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 965. This bill would authorize \$15 million for "hazardous tree removal or trimming for nonutility-related hazardous branches, limbs and trees on municipal property or within a municipal right-of-way."

We support this important funding for municipalities. However, SB 965 funding would not apply to caring for healthy trees inside and outside of the utility protection zone (UPZ), or planting new trees, or removing stumps to allow for re-plantings. These continue to be important needs that communities are wrestling with. Funding authorized in this bill should also support municipal efforts to maintain healthy trees in addition to addressing the important issues associated with declining tree health that are already included in the bill.

CTLCV urges you to act on the recommendations outlined in testimony provided by the CT Forest and Park Association who are key advocates for our state's tree conservation efforts:

1. Tighten 16-234(e) through codification of PURA orders in Docket No 18-12-25 (effectively adding parameters for permitted trimming when any part of a tree is in direct contact with an energized electrical conductor or has visible signs of burning).
2. No cost recovery by utilities from ratepayers for removal of trees outside of the statutory 8' UPZ.
3. Impose fines (not recoverable from ratepayers), for breaches of 16-234.

**For more information, please see below for additional points on the ecological value of roadside trees.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important bill.

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## Roadside Trees: Ecological Value and Impact on Carbon

- Roadside trees are typically the fastest growing and largest trees in the landscape because of increased light and reduced competition along the forest edge.
- **Roadside trees provide critical human health benefits** by filtering pollutants from roadways. Large trees filter far more pollutants than small trees.
- **Large trees reduce home energy use and carbon emissions** by cooling a house in summer and insulating it from cold winds in winter. Large trees (30 inches diameter) provide up to 6-7 times more avoided CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than small trees (3 inches diam.) of the same species
- Within a single urban landscape of the Northeast, areas with 30% less tree cover can be 7 degrees F hotter.
- **Large trees are considered 'keystone structures'** because of their significant contribution to a broad array of ecological processes and their critical value for biodiversity, local microclimate, soil moisture, and soil nutrient levels.
- A few large trees in a developed setting can have up to **2.5 times the diversity** of bird species as an equivalent number of smaller trees.
- **Large roadside trees are not only rare natural features on the landscape, they absorb carbon much faster and store more carbon** than the average tree in the forest. A red oak tree 36 inches in diameter stores about 4.5 metric tons of carbon in its wood, which is equivalent to the annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 3.5 passenger cars. That tree stores over 6000 times more carbon than a replacement tree 1 inch in diameter. A 1-inch diameter tree also absorbs 135 times less carbon dioxide each year than a 36-inch tree of the same species.
- When roadside trees are cut and turned into wood chips, most of the stored carbon in the wood is rapidly converted to CO<sub>2</sub> and released into the atmosphere, exacerbating the climate problem.
- **Large street trees provide unparalleled scenic beauty** and natural character in a town. They are town-wide treasures that cannot be replaced for at least a century