



TESTIMONY **IN SUPPORT** OF
HB 5108 An Act Concerning The Process For Objecting To Actions Taken By
Utility Companies Pursuant To A Vegetation Management Plan
March 11, 2023

To: Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Needleman and Rep. Steinberg, Vice Chairs Sen. McCrory and Rep. Foster, Ranking Members Sen. Fazio and Rep. Buckbee, Distinguished Members of the Energy and Technology Committee

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

On behalf of CTLCV, thank you for the opportunity to comment **in support of HB 5108**, which would allow additional time for property owners to object to a utility company's vegetation management plan.

"Vegetation management" is how utility companies frame their plan for addressing trees and shrubs that they consider to be a threat to our electrical infrastructure. However, in recent years, **tree removal by utility companies has gone far beyond what is reasonable**, with the removal of healthy trees that pose no threat to the grid, and clear-cutting large swaths of land.

Healthy trees provide numerous benefits to our communities: they clean our air of pollutants, absorb carbon, provide cooling and shade infrastructure, increase property values, and improve quality of life, as well as many other benefits that are just beginning to be understood.

There must be checks and balances in place in the process, so that we can have a reliable electrical grid in Connecticut *while also* protecting our trees.

The utilities are simply not held accountable and don't show any signs of slowing down. **The process for vegetation management must have more clarity, communication, and accountability.** Communities and residents should understand exactly why, how, and which trees the utilities are planning to remove, and be held accountable. Other than an immediate emergency, Utilities must justify their plans in advance with enough time for public review and professional independent evaluation.

Our trees are essential to our health, clean air, clean water, habitat, and climate mitigation. The Utilities have no obligation to protect trees

and will cut blindly until they are stopped by legislation based on good science and conservation practices. And there must be severe consequences for violations. We have all seen the destruction that Eversource has caused in so many communities, where people and their properties have been severely impacted by unnecessary destruction of trees in their communities, far beyond what can be justified for safety.

With regards to common sense tree management, Eversource is the biggest problem in our state. Despite their false claims, Connecticut can and must have an electric grid that does not come at the expense of our environment, nature, livelihood, and health. Please hold them to account.

Thank you for your consideration.

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