



## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

### SB 950 AAC THE REPLACEMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITY POLES AND REVISING VEGETATION MANAGEMENT IN UTILITY PROTECTION ZONES.

March 3, 2021

**To:** Honored Chairs Sen. Needleman and Rep. Arconti, Ranking Members Sen. Formica and Rep. Ferraro, Distinguished Members of the Energy & Technology Committee

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

On behalf of the League, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 950 which would allow utilities to destroy perfectly healthy trees and habitat with ZERO accountability or notification to affected parties. Handing this expanded power to the utilities would be an egregious lapse in responsible stewardship of our environment.

This policy reversal is under consideration at a time in our history when protecting healthy tree cover and sustainable forest management are increasingly seen as essential to mitigating climate change.

Protecting healthy trees is the simplest and the least expensive way to help heal our climate. This committee has rightly focused on building infrastructure to produce clean energy but should also recognize that there is a natural vegetative infrastructure in place now that can help achieve our climate goals—if it is not destroyed. This proposal flies in the face of recommendations recently released by the Governor's Council on Climate Change, which recognize trees as essential in curbing the damage from carbon emissions.

**Eversource's legacy of destruction can be seen across our state, with half butchered trees lining our streets and enormous clearcuts along our highways. This is what Eversource considers proper vegetation management.**

Bill 950 would give utilities free reign over town-owned street trees in the Utility Protection Zones, take away authority of local tree wardens, and eliminate the notification, consent, and appeal rights of the people, including private property owners.

This legislation would allow electric utilities to take immediate action on trees without first obtaining the tree warden's consent or consultation, and then potentially leaving the environmental damage for the town and tree warden to address.

The electric utilities are deaf to the concerns of our citizens regarding their reckless handling of our public trust resources. **Their effort to reverse the checks and balances that PURA restored to our state's management of its trees should be summarily rejected.** Thank you for consideration of our testimony.