

March 2, 2021



Connecticut General Assembly
Energy and Technology Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room
3900 Hartford, CT 06106
ettestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: Testimony in OPPOSITION to Raised Bill 950 (LCO No. 3970)

Dear Senator Needleman, Representative Arconti, and all members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

[The Greenwich Tree Conservancy](#) (GTC), is a non-profit organization of over 800 whose mission is to preserve and enhance Greenwich's urban forest to benefit the community, its health and its quality of life.

Greenwich Tree Conservancy strongly opposes Raise Bill No. 950

Bill No. 950's gutting of the tree warden duties and responsibilities and property owner's rights must be stopped. The State must ensure the preservation and protection of our town tree canopies and all the benefits they provide including among them to remove carbon dioxide and impurities from the air, provide nutrients to the soil, filter water, reduce stormwater runoff and soil erosion, provide cooling shade, and increase property values.

Our state statutes clearly give Town Tree Wardens the responsibility for the care and control of town trees. We are also a state that has preserved residents' rights when it concerns their private property. Bill No. 950 gives the utilities unlimited power over trees in the public right-of-way, and on private property with no ability of tree wardens or property owners to prevent unnecessary tree removals, even clear cutting, and to prevent pruning that could be harmful to the health and structural integrity of the trees.

This legislation proposes a change to the law that is inconsistent with the goals of the recent Governor's Council on Climate Change report: ***Taking Action on Climate Change and Building A More Resilient Connecticut for All***, which recognizes the importance of protecting and enhancing our forests, whether in urban or rural areas, for both climate mitigation and adaptation/resiliency benefits and the move to "No-Net-Loss" of tree canopy.

Understanding roadside environments, and how they interface with adjoining rights-of-way (ROW) and private property owners, while minimizing environmental impacts, must continue to be the key focus of the power distribution company's vegetation management practices as defined by state laws.

Our electric providers must be held to the highest standards supporting ecological health, safety and uninterrupted service. A resilient power grid and urban forest are not mutually exclusive.

We thank you for your consideration and opposition to this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

JoAnn Messina, Executive Director
Greenwich Tree Conservancy

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