



OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

Michael R. Criss
First Selectman, Town of Harwinton
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
February 15th, 2023

Good afternoon, my name is Michael R. Criss, I am the First Selectman for the Town of Harwinton and I am submitting testimony regarding S.B. 965 “An Act Providing Funding for the Removal of Hazardous or Dead Trees by Municipalities”.

S.B. 965 “An Act Providing Funding for the Removal of Hazardous or Dead Trees by Municipalities”.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and submit testimony on proposed S.B. 965 “An Act Providing Funding for the Removal of Hazardous or Dead Trees for by Municipalities”. The Town of Harwinton is in support of S.B. 965 as it will provide funding to assist towns in removing dead and decaying trees which is critical to the public safety of our communities.

Due to the vast number of dead and decaying trees resulting from insect infestations such as the emerald ash borer and gypsy moth, as well as more severe rain events and flooding, towns are faced with significant costs in removing trees along roadways or in parks or other areas. Dead and damaged trees can fall without warning, posing a serious threat to pedestrians, motorists, and other passersby.

Although towns have tried to budget additional funds or use Town Aid Road or Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCip) funds for tree removal, this funding has been inadequate to fund large tree removal projects given other local capital projects that must be funded to maintain and upgrade roads, bridges, and other infrastructure. The Town of Harwinton, for example, has had to increase its tree removal budget by more than 40% over the last few years in order to even try to make a dent in the fast growing of dead trees in our ROWs. Further we have noticed the state has a vast amount of trees in our municipality that need to be maintained as well so finding a program in which we can all work together is desperately needed.

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The Town of Harwinton implores you to support S.B. 965 as it will be very helpful in assisting towns in quickly removing trees that pose a public safety hazard.

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in support of S.B. 965 on behalf of the Town of Harwinton. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Criss".

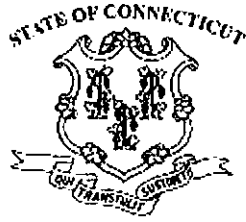
Michael R. Criss
First Selectman, Town of Harwinton
Vice Chair, Northwest Hills Council of Governments
Legislative Chair, Northwest Hills Council of Governments

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General Assembly

January Session, 2023

Raised Bill No. 965

LCO No. 3377



Referred to Committee on ENVIRONMENT

Introduced by:
(ENV)

AN ACT PROVIDING FUNDING FOR THE REMOVAL OF HAZARDOUS OR DEAD TREES BY MUNICIPALITIES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subdivision (3) of subsection (e) of section 7-536 of the
2 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
3 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

4 (3) (A) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (2) of
5 subsection (f) of this section, the secretary, at his or her discretion, may
6 authorize expense reimbursement for a project listed in subparagraphs
7 (T) to [(X)] (Y), inclusive, of subdivision (4) of subsection (a) of this
8 section prior to such project's inclusion on the local capital improvement
9 plan adopted by a municipality. The secretary may require certification
10 from the municipality that such municipality is taking steps to amend
11 its local capital improvement plan to include such project.

12 (B) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (c) of this section,
13 for the period commencing July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2025, the
14 secretary shall additionally authorize expense reimbursement for any
15 project listed in subparagraph (Y) of subdivision (4) of subsection (a) of

16 this section from funds appropriated for such projects pursuant to
17 section 2 of this act.

18 Sec. 2. (Effective July 1, 2023) The sum of fifteen million dollars is
19 appropriated to the Office of Policy and Management from the General
20 Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, for the purpose of
21 depositing such funds in the Local Capital Improvement Fund to
22 provide local improvement project grants for projects listed in
23 subparagraph (Y) of subdivision (4) of subsection (a) of section 7-536 of
24 the general statutes.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	July 1, 2023	7-536(e)(3)
Sec. 2	July 1, 2023	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To provide additional funding to municipalities for the removal of dead or hazardous trees in public areas and along town roads.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]