March 3, 2025

TESTIMONY OF
KEITH CAGLE, PRESIDENT
FRIENDS OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN
ON
HB 6236 AN ACT PROHIBITING WATERFOWL AND BIRD HUNTING IN SECTIONS OF THE MORRIS COVE AREA OF NEW HAVEN

Co-Chairs Lopes and Parker, Ranking Members Harding and Callahan and Members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Keith Cagle and I am President of Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen, a nonprofit 501(c)(4) advocating for the preservation of hunting, fishing, trapping and recreational shooting for current and future generations of Connecticut residents. I am here today to testify in opposition to House Bill 6236 AN ACT PROHIBITING WATERFOWL AND BIRD HUNTING IN SECTIONS OF THE MORRIS COVE AREA OF NEW HAVEN.

Hunters understand that can at times arise between them and residents near legal hunting areas can be contentious. The Legislature also recognized this reality and provided guidance in the General Statutes to work through hunting complaints and addressing concerns raised by those complaints. Specifically, CGS Sec. 26-67c, provides:

(a) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall maintain a record of all written complaints received by the department of violations of the regulations concerning hunting in proximity to buildings occupied by persons or domestic animals or used for storage of flammable or combustible materials or the regulations regarding shooting towards persons, buildings or animals. The commissioner shall hold a hearing at least once annually, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, at which changes in such regulations for particular localities shall be considered. The commissioner may amend such regulations for a particular locality where he finds that: (1) The physical setting of a particular locality presents an unreasonable risk that hunters may violate the regulations regarding hunting in proximity to buildings occupied by persons or domestic animals or used for storage of flammable or combustible materials or the regulations regarding shooting towards persons, buildings or animals; or (2) a record of documented complaints reveals that violations of such regulations occur with significant frequency.

(b) The chief law enforcement official for each municipality, or his designee, shall maintain a record of all complaints received by such official in each calendar year regarding any potential hazard to public safety related to any hunting activity and shall submit such record to the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection annually. Such record shall be maintained separately from all other records of complaints received by such official. After an investigation of any such complaint, if the chief law enforcement official determines that a particular hunting activity in a particular location poses a hazard to public safety, he shall submit a written report of such determination to the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection.

(c) On or before February 1, 1995, and annually thereafter, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment which sets forth for the preceding year ending December thirty-first the number of complaints received and investigations conducted along with the action taken.

Finally, under existing State regulations, no waterfowl hunting is allowed in tidal waters within 250 feet of an occupied dwelling unless written permission from the owner of such a building is obtained and carried by the hunter. Also, no hunting firearm shall be discharged toward any person or domestic animal when the same is within range (RCSA 26-66-1 [d]). In effect, this means that when waterfowl hunters are hunting from shore or close to shore in populated areas, they are legally required to fire seaward away from dwellings or people.

None of the carefully crafted and thoughtfully designed criteria identified both in State Statute and State Regulation are met in the Morris Cove area. For these reasons, I urge the Committee not to pass this bill and instead use the tools it has already clearly laid out in conjunction with the Department to address these matters.

Thank you.