



March 5, 2018

Testimony in Opposition of **S.B. 252, An Act Requiring the Sale of the Former Seaside Regional Center**

Dear Chairman McLachlan, Chairwoman Flexer, Chairman Fox, Ranking Member Devlin, and Members of the Government and Elections Committee:

Audubon Connecticut strongly opposes S.B. 252 and the sale of the Seaside Center to a private entity. If enacted, this legislation would set an unprecedented tone that our state parks can be sold to help meet the state's budget shortcomings.

Audubon Connecticut, the state office of the National Audubon Society, is one of Connecticut's premier conservation and environmental education organizations. With four Chapters, nearly 17,000 members, supporters, and partners across the state, through land stewardship, science, education, and advocacy, we work to preserve habitat and protect bird species that are of state, national and global concern. Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

This beautiful 34-acre property located on Long Island Sound in Waterford has the potential to be a true destination state park. We can celebrate the protection of our state parks, especially along the coast, when birders are able to see Long Island Sound filled with Common Terns in the late summer. This coastal space was just made a state park in 2014 – the first new park in 50 years! Sale of the Seaside Center would remove the property from public ownership and access to private access. Connecticut's public lands and open space is why people choose to live, work, and stay in our beautiful state.

Fiscal negligence of the past should not require us to sacrifice a coastal gem – one enjoyed by both people and birds.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you.

Genese Leach, Policy Manager