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## Testimony on SB 350 AN ACT REQUIRING THE POSTING OF A DECOMMISSIONING BOND FOR CERTAIN SOLAR PROJECTS

Environment Committee

Submitted by:  
Working Lands Alliance Steering Committee  
March 16, 2018

Senators Kennedy and Miner, Flexer, Somers and Representatives Demicco, and Gresko, and Other Distinguished Committee members:

The Working Lands Alliance (WLA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 350, An Act Requiring the Posting of a Decommissioning Bond for Certain Solar Projects.

My name is Chelsea Gazillo and I am the Project Director for the Working Lands Alliance (WLA), a broad-based, statewide coalition dedicated to preserving Connecticut's farmland. WLA includes organizations such as the CT Farm Bureau, the CT State Grange, CT Land Conservation Council, End Hunger CT!, and American Farmland Trust, among many others. As an Alliance, we care deeply about both Connecticut's farmland and about the viability and success of the farm businesses that work that land. As such, the issue of large scale renewable energy development on agricultural lands has prompted a significant amount of discussion within our coalition.

WLA supports SB 350, which would require developers of solar projects approved by the Siting Council on prime farmland to post a decommissioning bond sufficient to restore the farmland to a productive agricultural condition upon decommissioning of the solar array. WLA recognizes that some solar developers may agree, as a matter of course, to pay for the decommissioning of a solar array based on its size, location, and complexity. However, this bill would ensure that land owners are not left with acres of defunct solar equipment on their land years after their productive use, with no recourse to recoup the costs they face of removal and restoration. This bill appropriately puts the onus of decommissioning on the developer, not the farmer or land owner.

WLA respects Connecticut's Global Warming strategy, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the state by 80 percent below 2001 levels by 2050. And we appreciate the value of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's 2017 energy plan, which outlines how CT can reach this greenhouse gas emissions goal by sourcing 15% of our energy from clean energy resources,

including solar development. Prime farmland is an irreplaceable resource, and healthy, carbon rich agricultural soils can play a significant role in carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation. And we know that implementing strategic solar development standards and requiring bond resources for decommissioning efforts is imperative for maintaining the integrity of CT's best farmland.

We commend the Committee for considering this legislation, which would help ensure that farmland taken out of agricultural use for solar energy production is not lost forever but made suitable again for agriculture in the future.

On behalf of the Working Lands Alliance, I thank the Committee for allowing us to share our thoughts on SB 350. Please know that we are available as a resource should you seek additional information on this measure or other legislation related to farmland and agriculture.