

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1027

AN ACT REMOVING THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE STATE OPPOSE APPLICATIONS BY FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED INDIAN TRIBES TO CONVERT ANY PARCEL OF FEE INTEREST LAND TO FEDERAL TRUST

Title: STATUS.

Vote Date: 3/13/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/20/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor & Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is to remove the requirement presently in statute that the state must oppose any application by a Native American tribe to convert any parcel of fee interest land to federal trust status (i.e. a reservation). This would not prevent the Attorney General from opposing such an application if they felt it necessary but would eliminate the requirement that such opposition must occur as part of the process.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None provided.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Cathy Osten, State Senator: Testified in support of this bill, and stated that it would simply remove the requirement that the Attorney General oppose the change in status of land by default. She stated that the requirement to oppose was added as a tool to encourage federal tribes to develop and participate in collective bargaining tenets for their employees, as the Attorney General's office is only required to oppose land transfers by tribes that do not participate in collective bargaining. She stated that one of the sovereign recognized tribes in the state has fully participated in the collective bargaining process, and that this change would prevent the Attorney General using this as an excuse to bring action against the tribe.

Jody Cummings, General Counsel, Mashantucket Pequot Tribe: Offered testimony in support of this bill and provided an explanation of tribal trust lands and their importance to the Tribes. They stated that Tribal trust lands are crucial to Connecticut's economic wellbeing and development, and the blanket opposition against fee-to-trust transfer status required under current law is a poor choice for the state, as the Attorney General must dedicate time and resources to oppose a transfer that they may not, on principle, oppose. They stated that this provision would not prohibit the state from opposing a fee-to-trust application if the state sees fit but would eliminate a nonsensical requirement that this opposition must happen in all cases.

Chuck Bunnell, Chief of Staff, Mohegan Tribe: Testified in support of this bill, and stated that while the current law does not apply to the Mohegan Tribe, it nonetheless undermines tribal sovereignty by compelling the state to oppose fee-to-trust applications, regardless of the state's actual interest. He stated that this does not require the state to support any fee-to-trust applications, but rather removes the compulsion of opposition.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Liliana P., Revenue Agent 1, DRS: Opposes the bill for reasons unrelated to the content of the bill.

Reported by: Cam Clarke

Date: 3/27/2025