

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 26-129—sHB-5521

Environment Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING STERILE CULTIVARS, APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE USE OF CERTAIN MATERIALS AS FILL AND THE REVISION OF CERTAIN HOUSING-RELATED STATUTES.

SUMMARY: This act makes the following unrelated changes to state environmental, parking, and housing laws:

1. requires the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) to report to the legislature about the safety of sterile cultivars and distributing Japanese barberry;
2. revises application content requirements for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) large-scale beneficial filling pilot program;
3. makes a minor change to the law on off-street parking minimums; and
4. sunsets the majority leaders' roundtable group on affordable housing.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the change to off-street parking minimums is effective October 1, 2026, and the conforming changes to the Council on Housing Development take effect July 1, 2026.

§ 1 — REPORT ON STERILE CULTIVARS AND JAPANESE BARBERRY

The act requires CAES to submit a report to the Environment Committee by January 15, 2027, on the safety of (1) using, planting, importing, transporting, selling, and purchasing sterile cultivars (plants specifically bred or engineered to produce few or no viable seeds) and (2) distributing Japanese barberry in Connecticut.

Under the act, CAES must have a public comment period as part of its report preparation. The report may include recommendations about the cultivars and barberry, including legislative recommendations.

§ 2 — BENEFICIALLY RECLAIMED MATERIALS

As existing law allows, DEEP operates a pilot program for using beneficially reclaimed materials (for example, asphalt, brick, crushed recycled glass, or street sweepings) as fill materials to help reclaim or redevelop environmentally impaired or underutilized land.

Prior law required someone seeking authorization under the program to get zoning approval or other necessary permits from each municipality in which the beneficially reclaimed material will be used before submitting their application. Applicants had to submit a written copy of each approval with their application. The act instead requires them to either (1) submit these documents with their

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application or (2) include a reasonable estimate of when they will have them. Additionally, existing law requires that applicants comply with the state environmental justice law's public participation and community benefit agreement process. The act requires that applications have proof that this occurred.

§ 3 — MINOR CHANGE TO OFF-STREET PARKING LAW

The act makes a minor change to the law on off-street parking minimums, passed as part of the 2025 November Special Session housing legislation (codified in CGS § 8-3n).

Specifically, the act aligns the provision on setting parking minimums in conservation and traffic mitigation districts with the provision broadly limiting minimums for developments with fewer than 17 dwelling units. Under prior law, the exception to the broadly applicable limitation on setting parking minimums generally allowed municipalities to set minimum parking requirements for developments with fewer than 16 units in conservation and traffic mitigation districts. Under the act, this exception applies to developments with fewer than 17 dwelling units.

§§ 4 & 5 — SUNSETTING THE MAJORITY LEADERS' ROUNDTABLE GROUP

The act sunsets the majority leaders' roundtable group on affordable housing on June 30, 2026.

It also makes conforming changes in the law on the Council on Housing Development. Specifically, instead of having the roundtable group's chairs (the Senate and House majority leaders) each appoint a member to the council, the act requires the Senate president pro tempore and House speaker to each make an appointment. Created as part of the 2025 November Special Session housing legislation, the council advises and helps the Office of Responsible Growth's coordinator review regulations, develop guidelines, and establish programs on housing growth in the state.