

# The Connecticut General Assembly



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## D'Agostino Applauds PURA Decision on Tree Maintenance Programs

State Representative **Mike D'Agostino** is pleased with the [proposed final decision](#) by the [Public Utilities Regulatory Authority](#) regarding oversight of any tree trimming and removal done by electric companies.

"I want to thank PURA for aggressively pursuing this issue," Rep. D'Agostino said. "Many residents throughout the state have expressed to me their concern that the electric companies have been unnecessarily taking down or damaging healthy trees in their quest to keep lines clear. Certainly, damaged and dying trees need to be addressed but an appropriate balance must be achieved between maintaining power distribution and a healthy tree canopy. That is why I have been at the forefront of this issue since 2014 when I drafted the existing law that prevents the utilities from taking down trees on private property or the public right of way without adequate notice to homeowners. The PURA decision achieves that balance by requiring, among other things, more robust notification to homeowners before tree work is performed, including a direct phone number to a live customer service representative."

"I want to thank the tireless environmental advocates who have for years sought to protect our trees and environment from unnecessary deforestation, including, of course the Hamden Alliance for Trees and the Hamden Tree Commission."

In its December 14 draft decision, which is expected to become final, PURA determined that UI was circumventing state statute by using the emergency exemption for wire direct contact to trim trees without direct contact. Regulators also found that UI was deficient in its compliance with its notice requirements to customers when trimming and/or removing trees and ordered improvements. PURA also agreed with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Division of Forestry recommendation to establish a working group to address the utilities' vegetation management programs with an eye toward programmatic improvements and addressing emerging issues.

"The Hamden Alliance for trees is thrilled to see the draft decision from PURA regarding UI's misuse of their Targeted Risk Management plan (TRM) in their service area," said Diane Hoffman of Hamden Alliance for Trees. "We, along with concerned residents throughout the UI service area, have been testifying before PURA and working for years, with the help of State Representative Mike D'Agostino, to rein in UI's overly aggressive pruning and removal of trees. The TRM program which they used was an abuse of the emergency exception clause in the law and we are delighted that PURA has ordered them to stop using that practice as their standard operating procedure."

Representative D'Agostino is a strong supporter and champion of legislation to protect Connecticut's vegetation, ensuring utility companies comply with tree maintenance guidelines, and the rights of property owners and residents from excessive or inappropriate tree maintenance. (See [PA 14-151](#), An Act Concerning Tree Trimming, [PA 17-117](#), An Act Concerning Public Notice of Tree Removal on Municipal Property).

"We are very thankful to Chairman Marissa Gillett, Vice Chairman John Betkowski and Commissioner Michael Caron for making this critically important decision," said Hoffman. "We hope our town officials will contact UI and instruct them to follow the draft decision effective immediately to better protect our trees."

PURA's proposed decision is not final until all parties have the opportunity to present final comments.

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