

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 16-144

HB5601

Senate	3090, (3094-3096)	4
Planning & Development	640, 691, 844-845, 931, 932, 1071-1074, 1075-1076, 1078-1080	15
House Transcripts have not been received. They are available on CGA website, but are not the Official copy. Contact House Clerk for assistance (860) 240-0400		19

Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing(s) and/or Senate and House of Representatives Proceedings

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2016**

**VOL. 59
PART 9
2751 – 3097**

/je
SENATE

340
May 4, 2016

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

On Calendar page 22, Calendar 536, House Bill 5540 -

-

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

On Calendar page 22, Calendar 537, House Bill 5601 -

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THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

On Calendar page 23, Calendar 544, House Bill 5484 -

-

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

On Calendar page 24, Calendar 551, House Bill 5289 -

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THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

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SENATE

May 4, 2016

THE CHAIR:

All right. Mr. Clerk, will call the Consent Calendar. The machines will be open.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER:

(Inaudible comment.)

THE CHAIR:

Okay. Just get going. It's getting there. It's getting there. You've got to call for a vote. Okay. She's pulling it up, she's pulling it up.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President, if the Clerk can just read the bill numbers and not the titles, that would be great.

THE CHAIR:

That's right. Okay.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5470, House Bill [inaudible], 5423,
[inaudible], 5593, 5360, 5311, 5359, 5366, 5317,
5329, [inaudible], 5438, 5637, 5520, 5553, 5510,
5420, 5540, 5484, 5306, 5289, 5639, 5147, 5411,
5055, [inaudible], 5479, 5138, 5189.

(HB5356) (HB5629)

(HB5433) (HB5291)

(HB5601) (HB5051)

(HB5638) (HB5556)

(HB5261) (HB5596)

(HB5259) (HB5444)

THE CHAIR:

Okay.

(Applause.)

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SENATE

May 4, 2016

The machine is open.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President, I need to add one more. Calendar 513, page 19, Calendar 513, House bill 5553.

THE CHAIR:

It's already on Consent, sir. May I open the machines to vote.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Yes?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

I need to, does the Clerk have agendas 6 and 7?

THE CHAIR:

Yes, sir.

THE CLERK:

The Clerk has Senate Agenda 6 and 7. They have been printed and on Senators' desks and dated Wednesday, May 4, 2016.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President, I move that all items on Senate Agendas 6 and 7, dated Wednesday, May 4, 2016, be

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SENATE

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May 4, 2016

acted upon as indicated and the Agenda be incorporated by reference in the Senate Journal and transcript and placed immediately on the Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call is ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Come on, come on, come on. Crisco, Crisco, Crisco.
Where's Crisco? Where is Crisco? Come on Joe.

All members have voted? All members have voted?
The machine will be closed. The Consent Calendar passed.

THE CLERK:

Consent Calendar Number 3 [inaudible].

(Applause.)

THE CHAIR:

I almost [inaudible] holding the clock back. Don't worry about it [inaudible] it. Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President, I move that we adjourn Sine Die.

THE CHAIR:

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**PLANNING
AND
DEVELOPMENT
PART 2
576 – 1100**

2016

PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

you very much for coming today. I have to know -- I have to let you know I did check to see if any of the local water systems could accept Niagara Bottling down in the Sprague/Norwich area. Our water shed was not quite as large as the MDC and the answer was no, but I did ask.

SENATOR BYE (5TH): Thank you Senator and thank you for your indulgence today. Thank you --

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): You're welcome. We next have Speaker Sharkey up and after the Speaker we will be traveling between the public and public officials. Thank you very much for coming before us today, Speaker.

Speaker Sharkey (88TH): Thank you Madam Chairwoman. It's great to be back as part of the P&D Committee; my old stomping grounds. So thank you for having me. Not all the leadership for the committee is here, but I do want to thank you and Chairman Miller and Representative Aman and Senator Linares and all the members of the Planning & Development Committee for hearing actually a total of four bills that are before you for hearing today all stemming from the work of the MORE Commission.

They include House Bill's 5604 and going backwards 5603, 5602, 5601, but I have testimony prepared for all of those bills. But I, in particular, wanted to focus my comments today in support of 5604, which is AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL EFFICIENCIES.

The intent of this bill is to take our efforts to promote regional solutions and efficiencies to the next level. And what I mean by that is we have, I

PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

JOHN ELSSESER: Thank you very much. It's always a pleasure to testify for the Planning & Development Commission. Thank you very much. Today I'm -- my name is John Elsseser. I'm the Town Manager of the town of Coventry and today I'm testifying in my role as the second Vice President of CCM.

So I'm here to testify on the following regionalism bills 5601, 02, 03, and 04. Collectively these bills represent the recommendations of the MORE Commission on whose sub-committees numerous municipal officials serve. It must be clarified that the municipal members of the MORE sub-committees did not participate in the deliberations that led to the set of proposals that you're seeing today.

HB5602
HB5603
HB5604

The recommendations represent the collective raised bills that I mentioned. While well intended, raise numerous concerns for towns and cities and fail to identify needed relief from some burdensome unfunded mandates. CCM has strong concerns with House Bill 5604, which would require the MORE Commission and consultation of LPM municipalities, labor unions, and business leaders.

This study regionalism, best practices, and developed an evaluation tool to measure the performance and efficiencies. Traditionally the bill would then require the MORE Commission to submit the recommendations on municipal funding based on these criteria. This is problematic to towns and cities because changing the process of municipal aid funding should not be taken lightly.

Why numerous municipal CEOs have participated in MORE sub-committees, only state legislatures served

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March 11, 2016
11:00 A.M.

PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

REP. MILLER (36TH): No. You're all set. Thank you.
Okay.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): I know you all want to rush
away, but --

REP. MILLER (36TH): John Hodge? Eric Brown? Joshua?
No. Estelle Parker? Pat Hatcher? Tollie Miller? Oz
Griebel? The floor is yours sir. Welcome.

SB 331
SB 422

OZ GRIEBEL: Senator Osten, Representative Miller,
members of the committee my name is Oz. I'm with the
MetroHartford Alliance and I appreciate the
opportunity to testify on several bills that are
before you today.

Those of you not familiar with our organization, we
serve as the economic development leader for
northcentral Connecticut, basically the 40 towns
that constitute the Capital Region Council of
Governments and we get paid by our investors to see
that this region and the state overall competes for
jobs, capitol, and talent.

So as I make my comments it's within that spirit of
ensuring that we have economic growth, employment
growth, and increases in per capita income that
drive tax revenues here in the state.

HB 5602
HB 5603
HB 5604

I'm here in support of House Bill's 5601, 02, 03,
and 04; many of them coming out of the MORE
Commission. We believe in improving the quality and
cost of delivering key services has to come about as
a combination of regional restructuring, greater
regional cooperation, and contracting with
appropriate private sector entities.

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March 11, 2016
11:00 A.M.

PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

We reference -- I know Brian Renstrom is not here, but certainly put a plugin for the work that he has done on behalf of the Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st century and the white papers that they have submitted to you in the past. I'm here on second point to oppose House Bill 331.

We recognize the key -- the importance of this infrastructure component, high-speed, accessible, affordable brand -- access to high-speed internet service is important to our residents, to our employers of all sizes, and to the future of however we use big data for appropriate economic growth.

At the same time we're very concerned about the \$20 million in that bill given the fiscal challenge that we face here in the state and more importantly or as importantly, the need to engage the private sector in designing where we want to go on these key issues given the amount of capital they invest in the state and the services that they provide.

We sent a letter in to the governor and to all of you dated February 1st about the desire and ability to engage the private sector on a number of our issues and encourage that breaking down of silos where there's more interaction between private sector, those with expertise, experience, and investment with those of you in the public sector and we would encourage that kind of approach on this.

I'm here, finally, to oppose House Bill 422 with all appropriate recognition and respect for the concerns of the proponents of that bill. I've read Peter



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
March 11, 2016

Benjamin Barnes
Secretary
Office of Policy and Management

Testimony Regarding Senate Bill No. 331, Senate Bill No. 420, Senate Bill No. 421, Senate Bill No. 425, House Bill No. 5601, House Bill No. 5602, House Bill No. 5603, and House Bill No. 5604

Senator Osten, Representative Miller and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony regarding the following bills:

Senate Bill 331 An Act Establishing a High-Speed Internet Service Pilot Program. This bill appropriates \$20 million from the general fund to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to establish a high speed internet service pilot program. *OPM opposes this bill* because the pilot program was not included in the Governor's proposed budget and the general fund is not able to support a program of this magnitude at this time. The bill would also require OPM to expend valuable and limited staffing resources at a time when OPM is working to identify and preserve its core functions.

Senate Bill 420 An Act Establishing a Pilot Program to Identify Residents with Unmet Needs Based on Unpaid Water Bills. This bill would require the OPM to establish a pilot program that would seek to identify residents who have had their service discontinued at least once in the last twenty four months due to an unpaid bill or have an outstanding water utility bill of one hundred fifty dollars or more. Once the residents have been identified, the bill requires OPM to consider implementing a program that would address these residents' unmet needs and submit a report on its findings and recommendations. *OPM opposes this bill* because it requires OPM to gather information that is not available to it. Water companies are not permitted to share information regarding billing or other account information with anyone other than the customer of record. In addition to the obvious logistical issues in being required to gather information it doesn't have access to, this bill would again create additional responsibilities for OPM during a time of limited resources.

Senate Bill 421 An Act Concerning Community Empowerment and the Neighborhood Assistance Act. This bill would require OPM to create and maintain a website for residents and organizations to submit their proposals for solutions to urban area problems. It also requires OPM to establish a pilot program to implement the proposal if OPM determines that the proposal is viable. Once again, *this bill would increase responsibilities at OPM at a time when staff time and resources are severely limited.* Section 5 of the bill would establish a commission to (a) study the manner in which state funding is utilized by nonprofit providers, (b) review the requirements imposed on nonprofit providers and (c) evaluate nonprofit provider compliance with such requirements. The work of this task force would be duplicative of the work and analysis that has and continues to be done by the Governor's Cabinet on Nonprofit Health & Human Services. The cabinet is comprised of state agency health and human service agency commissioners and nonprofit provider representatives, and is charged with analyzing and making recommendations on issues related to nonprofit providers, including those outlined in the bill.

Senate Bill 425 An Act Concerning Municipal Transparency, Efficiency and Accountability. This bill would require OPM to award funding from the regional planning incentive account to up to 20 individual municipalities for the creation of a citizen relationship management system. There is nothing in current statute that prevents two or more municipalities from coming together to apply for funding through the Regional Planning Incentive Program (RPIP) for a citizen relationship management system through their Council of Governments. This bill would allow RPIP to fund municipalities in a way that undermines the purpose of RPIP, which is to encourage cooperation amongst municipalities, and reduce the funds available for other regionalization projects. It should also be noted that as a result of the budget agreement reached last legislative session, RPIP will not have funding deposited in the account in FY17.

House Bill 5601 An Act Concerning the Connecticut Transportation Institute and a Study of School Transportation Efficiencies. This bill allows OPM to pay for the study of school transportation efficiencies conducted by The Connecticut Transportation Institute through an RPIP grant. While the language pertaining to the funding of the study is permissive, we would like to point out that as a result of the budget agreement reached last legislative session, RPIP will not have funds deposited in the account in FY17. We would encourage the proponent of the bill to speak with the State Department of Education, which already has issued an RFP for a school transportation efficiency study in the Sheff region. In addition, groups of municipalities and councils of governments interested in obtaining efficiencies can do such studies on a regional basis. The subsequent savings would offset the cost of the studies.

House Bill 5602 An Act Concerning Regionalism. Section 7 requires RPIP funds to be distributed to the Auditors of Public Accounts in order to audit private providers of special education services. This would impose a significant fiscal impact on the RPIP fund at a time when funds will no longer be deposited in the RPIP account as a result of the budget agreement reached last legislative session. We believe this should be funded through the General Fund, as these funds would be used to pay for staff positions. Funding positions through RPIP is not consistent with the intent of the program and also raises concerns over which entity would ultimately be responsible for fringe benefit costs.

House Bill 5603 An Act Concerning Regional Technology. Section 5 of this bill requires the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to publish on its website a list of state technology contracts. DAS already publishes all contracts on the state contracting portal, which is available to the public.

House Bill 5604 An Act Concerning Regional Efficiencies. This bill requires OPM to implement a regional efficiency tool developed by the MORE Commission and to distribute funding based on that evaluation tool. The language is not clear on what kind of funding would be distributed based on the tool. For instance, the language does not indicate whether bond funding should also be based on these criteria. In addition to this uncertainty, the bill again requires more of OPM during a time of limited resources.

As a whole, while we may support the intent of many of these proposals, the vast majority of the bills referred to in this testimony would require OPM to take on additional responsibilities and require additional resources at the very time that the agency is determining how to reduce its tasks and responsibilities down to its core mission. In addition, RPIP grants will be significantly limited due to the elimination of funding for the RPIP account in FY17.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on these proposals. If you should require any additional information, please contact Acting Undersecretary David LeVasseur at david.levasseur@ct.gov.



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Testimony Regarding

Raised Bill 5601

An Act Concerning the Connecticut Transportation Institute and Study of School Transportation Efficiencies

made before the

Planning and Development Committee

March 11, 2016

Senator Osten, Representative Miller, members of the Planning and Development Committee - my name is John Filchak, Executive Director of the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments. I also come before you today as a member of the Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) where I chaired the Education Policy Working Group for the Regional Entities Subcommittee. **Raised Bill 5601 speaks directly to issues we examined through the Education Policy Working Group and I urge your favorable consideration of this legislation.**

Connecticut does not have any metric that measures the use of public funds for student transportation. This lack of information severely limits the state's ability to create incentives for efficiency. **Raised Bill 5601** would reverse this situation and lead to a more efficient use of public funds for the transportation of students in our state.

According to a recent Office of Legislative Research Report¹:

State law requires school districts to provide transportation for all school-age children whenever it is "reasonable and desirable" (CGS § 10-220(a)). In general, this requirement is limited to transportation to public and certain nonprofit, private schools located within the school district. The only out-of-district transportation school districts must provide is for students attending state technical high schools and district designated regional agricultural science and technology centers. Within these requirements, local and regional boards of education retain discretion over district transportation policies, including the number of school buses, bus routes and stops, the students to whom they will provide transportation, and maximum walking distances. The SDE has issued guidelines for district policies (School Accommodations Workshop Package, October 2008, pp. 28-31), but they are not mandatory. The state provides an annual grant to local school districts that reimburses them for part of the cost of providing public school transportation. Reimbursement percentages vary from zero to 60% depending on the relative wealth of the town or towns making up the district. The state also provides additional funds for school districts, regional education service centers, and other entities that provide transportation for students attending certain schools outside their home districts."

¹ Office of Legislative Research Report 2012-R-0085, By: Judith Lohman, Assistant Director, February 6, 2012 "School Transportation Requirements and Funding"

Based on figures compiled by the Connecticut School Transportation Association, "public school transportation cost \$362,082,815"² (2006-07 school year). The total number of public school students transported was 456,652. Local schools transported 418,513 students, 17,450 special needs students, 4,111 In-town Vo-Tech students, 6,705 out-of-town vo-tech and vocational agricultural students, 6,621 out-of-town magnet school students, 3,140 out-of-town public high school students and 112 out-of-town charter students. Total public expenditures for private school transportation was \$21,177,896 (2006-07 school year). Total number of private school students transported was 21,166.³ That association also notes that the "percentage of total student population receiving public transportation is 80%". Average per pupil cost for public school transportation \$792.91. Per pupil cost for local schools \$482.82. Per pupil cost for special ed students on special vehicles \$6,546.49. Average per pupil reimbursement for private school transportation \$188.74.⁴

The FY 2015 State Budget includes two statutory grants⁵ to municipalities specifically for school transportation totaling \$28,480,248: Public School Transportation Grant - \$24,884,748, Non-Public School Transportation Grant - \$3,595,500. In addition, \$62 million was granted to school districts and RESCs for Magnet School and Open Choice.

The monies provided to municipalities for student transportation come with no incentives or conditions for cost efficiencies. A recent report from Oregon concluded that transportation "expenditures could be reduced by an estimated 9 percent if inefficient districts adopted the practices of the most cost-efficient districts."⁶ If this were the case in Connecticut, the resulting annual savings would be \$2,563,222 to the State. Based on the ED001 data, school districts spent \$451,735,621 on school transportation in FY14 (this includes the reimbursements that they received from the state, but does not include funds provided to RESCs for Open Choice and magnet transportation.) Based on the 9% savings, the savings would be \$40,656,205 - \$2.56m to the state, the rest to the districts. Of the \$451.7m, \$162.8m is special education transportation.

The State of Washington, as one example, has developed and Efficiency Rating System (ERS) for school district efficiency.

ERS employs a methodology known as the Target Cost approach, which produces estimates of the best possible performance of each school district relative to peer school districts, while taking into account as many school district site characteristics as possible.

The objective of the ERS is to identify, for each school district, an empirically based and mathematically sound minimum expenditure level and minimum number of buses that allows the school district to transport its students to and from school, while recognizing local site characteristics that influence cost, but are beyond the direct control of school district management.

The intent is to be able to identify school districts that, while receiving full funding under the STARS, have room for improving efficiency. It is also useful to employ this tool as a mechanism to identify what the costs should be for a school district that consistently expends more than the formula provides. In

²Connecticut School Transportation Association, <http://ctschoolbus.com/index.php>

³ IBID

⁴ IBID

⁵ State Of Connecticut, Fy 2015, Fy 2016 And Fy 2017 - Estimates Of State Formula Aid To Municipalities

⁶ Oregon Public School Transportation Funding: An Evaluation of Alternative Methods Prepared for The Oregon Department of Education January 2009

this sense, it provides a "target" of what such a school district should aim for in attempting to operate more economically.⁷ (emphasis added)

Finally, funding this work through the Regional Performance Incentive Program makes sense. The initiative is fully consistent with the intent of that program - to foster regionalism and efficiencies in the spending of public funds.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions or need additional information.

John Filchak
Executive Director
john.filchak@neccog.org

⁷ A Description of the Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System Efficiency Rating Process, State of Washington. <http://www.k12.wa.us/transportation/STARS/EfficiencyRatings/efficiencysystemdescription.pdf>

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



J. BRENDAN SHARKEY
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Good morning Representative Miller, Senator Osten and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee. I'm offering testimony today in favor of a series of bills that were developed through the work of the M.O.R.E. Commission this year.

House Bill 5601: An Act Concerning the Connecticut Transportation Institute and a Study of School Transportation Efficiencies

House Bill 5602: An Act Concerning Regionalism,

House Bill 5603: An Act Concerning Regional Technology.

This package of legislation looks at ways that we can offer municipalities more opportunities to save money, which in turn, can result in less of a dependence on property taxes to fund essential services. This package of legislation utilizes the basic principles of regionalism by encouraging collaboration to offer a more efficient and cost effective method of delivering services at a time when all budgets are being tightened.

Educational costs can often account for up to 80% of a municipalities' budget. HB 5602 will allow our Regional Education Service Centers (RESC's) to apply for RPIP funds. Allowing RESC's to apply for this same fund, that our Councils of Government (COG's) already apply for, will allow for greater savings and foster greater collaboration within municipalities by allowing for more joint shared services.

There should not be any reason why the person who mows the lawn at the high school can't also mow the lawn at the town park. We need to look at how we can reduce duplicative back office functions within a municipality. The first step is by allowing the RESC's to apply for the RPIP funds so that it can be used to make these entities work together for the better of the taxpayer. We are also asking that plans of conservation will now take into account the need to promote regional efficiencies in education and educational opportunities.

Coordination of law enforcement services between municipalities can provide valuable opportunities for cost saving and improved coverage. In considering the regionalization of law enforcement, the Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) contemplated three models. When municipalities are forced to consider consolidating law enforcement to accommodate fiscal realities, sharing resources in this way can be a viable way to preserve services. Cooperation has the potential to allow the sharing of equipment, greater consistency in coverage due to decreased need to call in outside reinforcements like state police, and opportunities for more training concentrated on fewer personnel with more hours.

A pilot program allowed two Connecticut towns, Roxbury and Bridgewater, to share a Resident Trooper starting in 2014, a joint contract that both towns chose to renew in July of 2015. In municipalities with lower populations, Resident Troopers can serve multiple communities (like Roxbury at 1,704 residents and Bridgewater at 2,322) at similar ratios as they would be serving in larger towns (like Columbia, with one State Trooper and 5,464 residents). Regional Police Departments in Pennsylvania have reported decreased costs, increased coverage and training, and improved community involvement as impacts of regionalization. Law enforcement partnerships in the forms envisioned by the MORE Commission or otherwise can allow municipalities greater coverage and lower costs if such partnerships are both feasible and desired.

One area in particular where regional cooperation is both enhanced and utilized effectively is in the use of technology. The Nutmeg Network continues to allow municipalities to operate more efficiently and improve back office functions. Encouraging greater access to and better utilization of the available technology remains a main focus. House Bill 5603 seeks to create a statewide technology plan that will weave technology deeper into the function of government and provide municipalities greater opportunities to create technological efficiencies and savings.

HB 5603 looks to take steps to create a statewide technology plan. It will look to identify and convene key stakeholders to provide input to a Statewide Technology Plan that informs the Plan of Conservation and Development at the local, regional and statewide level and include state and local technology linkages. Such plans of conservation and development would now take into consideration the application and use of technology to enhance efficiencies, foster collaboration, increase transparency and access to information and reduce costs.

In an effort to make municipalities more aware of cost saving opportunities HB 5603 asks that a list of technology contracts that are available from the state. The purpose of this is to make sure that any applicable opportunities are made available to all political sub-divisions so that they can better realize cost savings.

Student transportation budgets are a major cost to municipalities. It is inefficiencies that drive up these costs. We need to change the way we are transporting our students, but we need to do to come to a solution with solid data and guidelines in place. As we look for ways to lift costs that burden our taxpayers there are certain items that are deemed to be 'low fruit', or sensible options to alleviating municipal costs. School transportation costs are one of those items. HB 5601 will take the initial steps that will allow us to identify savings for our taxpayers.

HB 5601 calls for a study to be performed by the Connecticut Transportation Institute (CTI), which operates within the School of Engineering at the University of Connecticut. They are a well-respected and long established group who has already partnered with the state on many research endeavors. They will be tasked with identifying best practices to be used to reduce costs and increase efficiencies in student transportation. Afterwards they will report their findings to the Education and Planning and Development committee. Based on what they report, it is envisioned that legislation would be drawn that would permit and encourage school districts to regionalize more of their student transportation.

There should not be a reason why there are six busses, from four different towns, all traveling on the same road to deliver students. This is the true definition of inefficiency. These are the inefficiencies that add up to bloat municipal budgets and raise local property taxes. Savings found in student transportation can go towards actual educational items that will actually benefit our students.



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

March 11, 2016

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 96% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

My name is John Elsesser, I am the Town Manager of Coventry, and serve as the Second Vice President on the Board of Directors for CCM. I am here to testify on the following bill of concern to towns and cities.

- HB 5601** **"An Act Concerning the Connecticut Transportation Institute and a Study of School Transportation Efficiencies"**
- HB 5602** **"An Act Concerning Regionalism"**
- HB 5603** **"An Act Regional Technology"**
- HB 5604** **"An Act Concerning Regional Efficiencies"**

Collectively these bills represent the recommendations of the Municipal Opportunities for Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission, on whose subcommittees numerous municipal officials serve. The MORE Commission was tasked with identifying efficiencies, opportunities to regionalize services and promoting ways that municipalities can work together to maximize shared services and lower the cost of providing local services. It must be clarified that the municipal members of the MORE sub-committees did not participate in the deliberations that led to the set of proposals before you today.

The recommendations represented by the collective raised bills listed above, while well-intended, raise numerous concerns for towns and cities and fail to identify needed relief from burdensome unfunded mandates.

requirement to expand that mandate is troubling to towns and cities. These recommendations should provide savings to towns and cities not add additional burdens that must be met by local taxpayers. Planning and Zoning Commissions may not be knowledgeable about the operations or laws of the Town and State.

CCM strongly supports section 6 which would allow any municipality to partner with one or more municipalities to share the services of resident state troopers or other law enforcement personnel.

This is an issue that municipalities statewide have raised, with the increasing costs of providing local law enforcement and to the Resident State Trooper program this section increases the options available to towns and cities when it comes to providing public safety. This is an issue where current law prohibits regionalization and this measure knocks down the barriers and allows municipalities to find the best and most efficient way to provide law enforcement in their community.

CCM opposes Section 7 which would allow for RPIP funds to be used by the State Auditors of Public Accounts to audit private providers of special education services. This is the responsibility of the State and should not be conducted with scarce funds that should be directed to local and regional efficiency projects.

HB 5603: REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY

As previously stated **any expansion of the requirements to be considered when updating local POCDs is a mandate**, and the recommendation of HB 5603 to require any POCD updated after October 2016 to consider the application and use of technology to promote efficiencies and reduce costs is an unfunded mandate. Towns and cities already adhere to a lengthy a prescriptive list of issue that must be considered when updating a POCD, efforts should be made to reduce the time and costs of updating and approving a POCD rather than adding to the burden.

Additionally HB 5603 would establish December 31, 2017 as the deadline for municipalities or COGs to apply for grant funding to implement and operate the "Nutmeg Network". CCM opposes the proposed deadline for applications as numerous projects remain unfunded and would recommend these grants remain available until the demand for connecting to the Nutmeg Network has been met.

HB 5601: STUDY OF SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCIES

The bill would authorize the Connecticut Transportation Institute to study methods and practices local school districts may utilize to reduce costs and increase efficiencies in the provision of student transportation. To complete this study, a grant in the amount of \$250,000 from the Regional Performance Incentive Programs (RPIP) may be used. The RPIP grant is intended to

fund municipal applications for regional projects and this additional study would further draw down on these limited funds leaving municipal and regional projects stalled.

CCM and its member towns and cities look forward to working with the Committee, the proponents of these bills and continuing to work with the MORE Commission to identify and remove the barriers to regionalization, provide the opportunities to realize efficiencies in the provision of local services. These proposals while well-intended provide limited means for towns and cities to save money, rather it creates a further dilution of needed RPIP funds and imposes new unfunded mandates.

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If you have any questions, please contact Randy Collins, Advocacy Manager of CCM at rcollins@ccm-ct.org or (860) 707-6446.



MetroHartford Alliance Statement

**Connecticut General Assembly
Planning and Development Committee
March 11, 2016**

The MetroHartford Alliance serves as the region's economic development leader and the City of Hartford's Chamber of Commerce. Our investors include businesses of all sizes, health care providers, arts and higher education institutions as well as the municipalities of North Central Connecticut. Our mission is to ensure that the region competes aggressively and successfully for jobs, capital, and talent so that it thrives as one of the country's premier places for all people to live, play, work, start and grow a business, and raise a family.

The Alliance encourages the members of the Planning and Development Committee to **support**:

- **H.B. 5601 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE AND A STUDY OF SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCIES**
- **H.B. 5602 - AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONALISM**
- **H.B. 5603 - AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY**
- **H.B. 5604 - AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL EFFICIENCIES**

The MetroHartford Alliance has long been an advocate for regional cooperation and strongly believes that our communities can serve taxpayers more efficiently and effectively by working together. Given the budgetary challenges that the state and municipalities are facing, it is critical that we develop avenues for our cities and towns to share services in order to reduce costs. Under the leadership of Speaker of the House Sharkey and others, the MORE Commission has served as an incubator for innovative policies focused crafting solutions that help our communities grow and thrive through collaboration. We applaud these efforts and the goals of the legislation above.

The Alliance encourages the members of the Planning and Development Committee to **oppose**:

- **S.B. No. 331 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM**
- **S.B. No. 422 - AN ACT CONCERNING RESIDENTIAL WATER RATES, PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLY EMERGENCIES AND SELLERS OF BOTTLED WATER**

S.B. 331 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM. The MetroHartford Alliance recognizes the vital importance of quality broadband internet service to the residents and employers of our state. Connecticut is fortunate to be able to offer industry-leading broadband speed to the state's employers and residents. This infrastructure, vital to Connecticut's economic competitiveness, is the result of hundreds of millions of dollars in investment by private sector providers and the hard work of the thousands of Connecticut residents that they employ. These businesses and their employees pay taxes and invest their dollars in our communities. Additionally, these providers develop the innovations in speed and access that are critical to our state's economy and technology community. Rather than spending millions of taxpayer dollars launching a broadband service that would threaten Connecticut residents' jobs, the state should instead treat