PA10-167

HB5336

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CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

PROCEEDINGS
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PART 8
2220 – 2570

The House reconvened at 7:42 o'clock p.m., Deputy Speaker Godfrey in the Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The House of Representatives will come back to order.

The Clerk will return to the call of the calendar.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 222.

THE CLERK:

On page 36, Calendar 222, Substitute for House Bill Number 5336, AN ACT ENCOURAGING SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION, favorable report by the Committee on Education.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

To distinguished Chairman of the planning and development committee, Representative Sharkey.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Good evening, sir.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Good to see you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

It's good to be seen.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Mr. Speaker, I move acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The question is on passage. Will you explain the bill, please, sir.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

I well, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Is to Speaker this is one of a package of bills that we intend to take up this evening between tonight and tomorrow, that is a direct product of the MORE Commission.

The MORE Commission stands -- the acronym stands for municipal opportunities and regional efficiencies and the MORE Commission was charged by -- the Speaker created and charged by the Speaker to look into ways in which we can work with towns here in Hartford, work with our neighbors at the municipal level to find ways to create efficiencies at the local level.

We all recognize that our economic situation in the state is not going to get any better over the next few years. That may involve some tough choices and

one of the things we can do for our state, as well as for our towns and cities and local taxpayers, is to try to find ways to make our local government more efficient.

This bill tonight is the first of the bills that are a direct output of that MORE Commission's efforts. The MORE Commission, I should also say began meeting in January. We completed its work on the phase one portion of our mission, which we recognized that we wanted to get some small accomplishable things out and decided upon by March 1st, so we could get it out for this legislative session.

Phase two of the MORE Commission will be occurring after the session is over and that phase of our efforts will be looking at the 2011 legislative session, for some of the more complicated, more difficult concepts that we need to take on if we're going to create a more efficient local and state partnership.

So Mr. Speaker, this bill essentially allows what everyone would think would be a common sense proposal, the notion that boards of education should be able to work with other boards of education to share services.

Currently, there is -- there are interpretations

of our state law that suggest that is not possible. That local boards of education are not empowered to work with neighboring boards of education in other towns to share services, like payroll operations or backroom operations or purchasing.

This bill explicitly eliminates any doubt in the statute that as long as it is allowed otherwise in the statute for boards of education to work with other -- and create those kinds of efficiencies, that nothing should be interpreted to prevent that from happening in the future.

That's Section 1 -- that is part of the bill. The other part of the bill is a new approach to state grants which I'll discuss -- we refined in the amendment and, in fact, I think at this point about how Mr. Speaker, I would like to call the amendment. It's LCO Number 4350. I'd ask the Clerk to call and I would -- I'd be given leave of the chamber to summarize.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The Clerk is in possession of LCO Number 4350, which will be designated House Amendment Schedule "A."

Mr. Clerk, would you please call the amendment.

THE CLERK:

LCO 4350, House "A," offered by Representative Sharkey.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The gentleman has asked leave of the Chamber to summarize.

Is there any objection?

Hearing none, please proceed, Representative Sharkey.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This amendment keeps Section 1 of the bill that I already described and eliminates Section 3 of the original file copy, but clarifies section -- what is Section 2 of the underlying file copy. This is a new approach to doing state grants for municipalities and is a pilot program that also came from the MORE Commission, which we think may be a model for how we can help promote regional efficiencies statewide into the future.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the narrow grant of school transportation, we allow our towns and cities and airports of education to contract individually for school bus contracts. The grant that we provide to help subsidize those costs that goes

directly to the towns, as opposed to the boards of ed, is made out to every town in the state, 169 separate checks, all for the purpose of helping to subsidize school transportation costs.

However, there's nothing in the formula that in any way encourages the possibility of promoting regional contracts for school transportation, which would, in theory, lower the cost for both the town and the State because towns have to pay their fair share of those transportation costs and the state subsidy could also be reduced.

What this amendment does, in section -- what is now Section 2 of the amendment, is proposed the notion that if a town and a board of ed agrees to work cooperatively with one or more other towns to form a multitown contract for school bus transportation, that results in savings for both the town and the state, that what the formula will do in our state grant is take the savings that the State would otherwise realize from that efficiency and get half of that savings back to the town as a bonus payment.

The state would still save money overall and the cost of the school is transportation subsidies, obviously, the localities to as well, but we're going

to get at the state level a portion of our savings and give it back to those towns that agree to regionalize those services.

This would be accomplished at the local level through interlocal agreement made up of all of the boards of ed that are participating entities may actually be carried out by our RESCs, our regional education service centers. It may be actually facilitated by a central city, like New Haven that has a very sophisticated school bus system, who could then work with their neighboring towns and provide those services.

But no matter what, the notion is that if towns and cities can put this together, the State should encourage that by including in this grant formula a method of giving them some type of financial incentive for looking at those regional efficiencies.

So I think it's a great step forward. I think it may be a model for how we want to do other kinds of state grants to our towns and our boards of education. Hopefully, it will result in additional money to our towns and cities as well as savings at the local and state level.

I move adoption, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The question is on adoption.

The distinguished ranking member of the Planning and Development Committee, Representative Aman.

REP. AMAN (14th):

Good evening and welcome back.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

Thank you, sir.

REP. AMAN (14th):

I will have some comments about the amendment and then when we come back to the bill as a whole, I also have a couple of questions regarding the bill.

But on this section regarding the school busing area, my first question will relate to, what is different from this section of the amendment versus the section that was in the original bill, except for putting out the fiscal years so that it meets the way the budget actually is figured and done.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Sharkey, do you care to respond?

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very good question. What we found when we introduced the

original file copy, we were trying to institute this as quickly as we could. So we had to -- we realized, though, that the way the grant is actually practically done is that local boards of education incur the cost in a given school year and then after that school year is over, certify the actual expense of their contract by September 1st.

Once they certify that, that becomes the basis for their great subsidy from the State, which is given to them the following year in July, July 1st of the following year. So we had to move the dates out to allow for this program to go into effect so that, in essence, if a town or boards of ed come together under the language of this amendment, they would do so in the fiscal year beginning July 1st of 2010. They would experience whatever savings they might realize through the FY '11, through that fiscal year. The FY '11 fiscal year and then certify that to the State.

And then in FY '12 they would be entitled to that additional bonus payment. A technical answer to a technical question. Thank you.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Aman.

REP. AMAN (14th):

I thank the proponent. The actual cost that the chairman referred to is obviously what the board of educations paid or more for bus servicing and I understand the half of the savings would be that the State did not have to reimburse the towns would go back to the towns, so they would be more encouraged to do this sort of work.

But I do wonder how that savings is going to be calculated, since the towns are going to certify their actual costs and instead that when boards of educations do their budgets, very often they -- transportation is a very educated guess because things like costs of fuel may be factored in, number of students change, any change in the bus routes during the year. So the estimated cost of the budget cost during the course of the school year is actually a moving target for the municipalities or for the board of education.

So through you, Mr. Speaker, how is the actual cost, which is a very easy number to get, but how is the estimated cost without the shared services, where does that number come from, Mr. Speaker?

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Sharkey.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, another excellent question. We're going to be using the current school year contract dollar amount that will be certified this September of 2010 as the baseline. That will be the baseline cost that the town will be reporting.

If -- after having executed the contract that's on a multiton basis that saves money, and that is certified in September of 2011, that will be the basis for the bonus money, the savings between FY -- between September '10 and September '11 certified cost.

It's not the kind of thing that you're going to be able to budget for precisely, if I understand the gentleman's question. They only know that once the actual costs are certified by the boards of ed.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Aman.

REP. AMAN (14th):

So this year, for instance, this year's budget, once it is complete, there's an actual cost that will be the base for future years, but from what I've heard, the variable costs that may change from year to

year will either be added or subtracted from that base against the actual cost of future years.

And also tied into that is, since this year is the base, how many years going into the future when we continue to use this year as a base or where is the base for future years going to come from? Because it's my understanding that hopefully those savings will not occur just once, but over and over and over again.

So through you, Mr. Speaker, if I can have the chairman of the Planning and Development Committee just further explain how those costs and base years are actually going to work.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Sharkey.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, with a base year of 2010, as the gentleman knows, these bus contracts tend to be multiyear contracts.

So the towns themselves and the boards themselves will form an interlocal agreement in which they will agree how to carry out the contract, how to actually do potentially some revenue sharing with -- in terms

of where the buses are parked and what kinds of personal property taxes might be generated. That will be the function of their local -- interlocal agreement.

It will be FY '10, September of '10 certified number will be the baseline for the life of the new contract. And then that contract will then be the base for future contracts. So that's the intent of.

Whatever the September '10 number is, will be the basis for future contracts moving forward and for the life of the contract and then a new base will be set. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Aman.

REP. AMAN (14th):

Yes. In the introduction to the amendment, this section regarding transportation was referred to as a pilot program. From my quick reading through the amendment, I don't see the word "pilot" used, and normally that means a particular town or group of towns will be in a pilot program.

And my question regards the word "pilot," does that refer to this particular part of the amendment dealing with transportation? Or is it more of a

general use of the word "pilot," on the idea that when municipalities combined and there's a savings, they should receive some of the savings that the state has rather than all of the savings going to the state?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Sharkey.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, it is the latter.

I use the term "pilot" in a loose sense, because there's nothing in this bill that in any way diminishes existing school transportation contracted amounts. There's no obligation for towns to participate in this. This is something that they can -- they will do voluntarily and if it turns out that by combining their services, there would not be a savings realized well, then they don't have to contribute and they don't have to participate in this program.

So it's meant to offer an opportunity to look at whether we could actually incent regional activity through the grant -- grants that we currently have. It doesn't cost any additional money to the state. In fact, hopefully it will result in savings to both town

and local, but there's no additional appropriation that's needed to provide a financial incentive that we are offering. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Aman.

REP. AMAN (14th):

Yes. The answer is what I was hoping to hear and was expecting.

I do think it is a very good use of the word "pilot." Because hopefully, as we move forward over the next several years, there's going to be more and more combining of services and saving money. And one of the things that we always run into is when people come in and testify, we very seldom get exact numbers or really know if they had savings or the costs were more than they really anticipated.

This, because they're either going to get a check back -- or they're going to get a check back, and the state is going to have to write that check out, they're going to be very, very careful to keep very good records. And hopefully a few years from now we will be able to look at this program and put on our accounting hat and know exactly what the savings were, whether combining bus routes really did save any

money. Maybe it saved a little bit of inconvenience, but did the program actually work or not? And in that regard, I think it's very good to use this as a template for future combined programs and savings and how the state should participate.

The other section of the amendment was actually a removal of Section 3. And this would have allowed regional educational service centers to, among other duties, perform construction management services.

I think many of us, at the time it went through the committee, were a little bit uncomfortable with the idea of allowing that type of activity. I think the other part of us said, well, maybe they should be allowed to do it.

And as it moved through the system, I am very glad again, to see that that section was removed. I think it's something that should be looked at in the future, but I think it has to be looked at very, very carefully and also to see what, if any, types of restrictions we want to put on performing construction management services by a school employee. It's a very specialized area and I would want to make sure that the schools do have the construction expertise to actually carry that out when they start working on a

regional basis.

So I thank the proponent for the amendment and when the bill, as a whole, comes forward and, I will have more questions.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Thank you, sir.

Will you remark further House Amendment Schedule "A?" Will you remark further?

Now, let me try your minds.

All those in favor, signify by saying, aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Opposed, nay.

The ayes have it. The amendment is adopted.

Representative Aman.

REP. AMAN (14th):

Welcome back, again.

The questions I have, really because the rest of the bill is very clear, is just on the lines 1 through 5 when we talk about what can be combined and what can't.

And I believe the chairman of the Planning and Development said that under other statutes we have, it

talks about that any municipality that performs any service or has a right to do anything also has a right to combine with another municipality to perform the same service.

And however the question came up, whether a board of education could combine with a municipality or put a board of education combine with another board, my feelings from reading the statute was they could but there was a very large question, I guess, in other people's minds and this bill makes that very, very clear, that they are allowed to make that combination.

The one question I do have on that is that in some towns, including my own and quick talk around here, other towns have got either a policy or state law that, for instance, a board of education can write purchase orders, but the finance director or the finance department of the town is the one that actually has to write the checks.

In fact, I know in our town under the charter only the treasurer, which is an elected position, can sign the checks that are prepared by the finance department for the board of education.

And so for purposes of legislative intent, I just want to ask, is -- does this bill, as presented, over

ride any of those other statutes? Or if there are things in the law or in a town's policy that prevents a board of education from combining with either another board or a municipality on a particular service or a particular activity, that the other or current standing law would be the one that would actually be looked and enforced.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Sharkey.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

And it's a good question, and I think for legislative intent, the answer is no. This bill is not designed to override any existing individual statutes that may compel boards of ed to act in a certain way that might otherwise prevent them from engaging in a multi-board initiative.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Aman.

REP. AMAN (14th):

Again, I thank the proponent for his answers and I think that the bill, as a whole, as it's presented,

does do the job in both sections. It does allow -- very much clarify and hopefully encourage boards of ed to work more carefully with their municipal government. It will also encourage them to work with each other.

I think the transportation section in the amendment that is now part of the bill will hopefully serve as a pilot and an encouragement for, again, the sharing of services, cost savings and a method for the savings to be equally distributed between the towns' board of education and/or the state. So I do encourage my colleagues to support the amended bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

I thank the gentleman.

The gentlewoman from Bolton, Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question through you to the proponent of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Please frame your question, madam.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Representative, in the case where a town has a

transport situation and we're talking about a vo-tech school, which then would be to state. Is there any incentive for the town to be well work cooperatively with multi towns and the state transporting kids?

And of course, in the small towns it's significant when you have a few children from one town, a few children from the other town. And what has transpired in the past is we have had cooperative ventures that literally has taken students right up to the town line, leave them there, the next town picks them up, takes them to the next drop-off and sometimes it's a three-bus hop to take them up to the vo-tech school. It could be the vo-ag school. We're not naming any towns, however.

so my question here is, is there any incentive, in this particular bill or was that discussed, the cooperative interests between the towns and the State?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Sharkey.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, the specific example that the gentlewoman refers to was something that was discussed, but I'm not sure that this bill necessarily

addresses it, in particular, because the methodology, by which, we are providing the incentive is through the school transportation grant.

So to the extent that a town utilizes that state school transportation subsidy to subsidize that type of transportation, the answer would be yes. Because in that scenario, that would be a function of the overall grant that they're getting from the State to help subsidize.

If they're using other means to subsidize the expense of transportation for state vo-tech schools, that would probably fall outside the scope of this bill.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you from past personal experience that those grants sometimes have not been used, that it has been on the regular morning school bus. The root has been designed to scoop them up, but their home dropped them off at a specific destination in then second pickup for the next town happens.

So it's not anything special about no special

grant money has been obtained for that, but I can't see where, as this progresses as a successful program, I'd like to be able to extend that out a little bit more to be able to do town/town, state, or town/state/town or something like that to be very creative, particularly for the smallest of towns. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Thank you, madam.

Remark further on the bill as amended? Remark further? If not, staff and guests please come to the well of the House. Members take your seat. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the chamber. The House is taking a roll call vote. Members to the chamber, please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Have all the members voted? Is your vote properly recorded? If so, the machine will be locked. The Clerk will take it down. And the Clerk will announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5336 as amended by House "A."

Total Number voting	133
Necessary for adoption	67
Those voting Yea	133
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	18

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The bill as amended is passed.

Are there any announcements?

The distinguished gentleman from Stamford, Representative Miller.

REP. MILLER (145th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For the purpose of an announcement.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Please proceed, madam.

REP. MILLER (145th):

I would like all of my colleagues to join me in wishing Representative Matthew Lesser a happy birthday.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

And -- happy birthday, Representative Lesser. Twenty-seven, I understand? Oh, those were the days. I remember them not at all.

Let's return to the call of the calendar.

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Calendar page 14, Calendar 511, House Bill 5527, move to place the item on the consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Continuing calendar page 14, Calendar 516, House Bill 5393, move to place the item on the consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Calendar page 15, Calendar 520 --

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney, one second please.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, thank you, Mr. President.

Calendar page 15, Calendar 520, House Bill 5336, move to place the item on the consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Calendar page 15, Calendar 521, House Bill 5424, move to place on the consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Calendar page 15, Calendar 523, House Bill 5223, move to place on the consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Calendar page 16, Calendar 531, House Bill 5004, move to place on the consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Calendar page 17, Calendar 533, House Bill 5436, move to place on the consent calendar.

Calendar page 10, Calendar 461, House Bill 5207; Calendar 483, House Bill 5244.

Calendar 484, on page 11, House Bill 5383; Calendar 487, House Bill 5220; Calendar 488, House Bill 5297; Calendar 490, 5425 -- House; Calendar 496, House Bill 5497; Calendar 509, House Bill 5126.

Calendar page 14, Calendar 511, House Bill 5527; Calendar 514, House Bill 5426; Calendar 516, House Bill 5393.

Calendar page 15, Calendar 520, House Bill 5336; Calendar 521, House Bill 5424; Calendar 523, House Bill 5223; Calendar 525, House Bill 5255.

Calendar page 16, Calendar 531, House Bill 5004.

Calendar page 17, Calendar 533, House Bill 5436; Calendar 540, House Bill 5494; Calendar 543, House Bill 5399.

Calendar page 18, Calendar 544, House Bill 5434; Calendar 547, House Bill 5196; Calendar 548, House Bill 5533; Calendar 549, House Bill 5387; Calendar 550, House Bill 5471; Calendar 551, House Bill 5413; Calendar 552, House Bill 5163; Calendar 553, House Bill 5159.

Calendar page 19, Calendar 554, House Bill 5164.

Calendar page 20, Calendar 556, House Bill 5498; Calendar 557, House Bill 5270; 559, House Bill 5407; 562, House Bill 5253; and House Bill -- Calendar 563, House Bill 5340; Calendar 567, House Bill 5371; and Calendar 573, House Bill 5371.

Mr. President, I believe that completes the items --

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, could you please give me on Calendar 567, do you have 5516, sir?

THE CLERK:

What -- what calendar?

THE CHAIR:

567 on page 22.

THE CLERK:

It's 5516.

THE CHAIR:

Yes, sir. Okay.

Machine's open.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on the consent calendar. Will all Senators please return to the chamber. Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate on the consent calendar. Will all Senators please return to the chamber.

THE CHAIR:

Have all Senators voted? Please check your vote. The machine will be locked. The Clerk will call the tally.

THE CLERK:

Motion is on adoption of Consent Calendar Number 2.

Total number voting	35
Necessary for Adoption	18
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

Consent Calendar Number 2 passes.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, Mr. President.

Mr. President -- Mr. President, before moving to adjourn, I would like to ensure the entire chamber will wish Laura Stefon, Senator McDonald's aide, my former intern, a happy birthday.

And with that -- and with that, Mr. President, I would move the Senate stand adjourn

JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS

PLANNING AND
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Secondly, there are a total of, by my count six bills that are on the public hearing agenda today, for which we have actually some proposed substitute language that's already been drafted by LCO, and area available at the Clerk's desk this morning.

These are, five of those six bills related to the recommendations of the MORE Commission regarding Municipal Opportunities on Regional Efficiencies. Those recommendations were finalized just last week well past our deadline for raising bills, so we had some place holders that we've held as a committee to be able to utilize for those recommendations that came out of the MORE Commission.

So if possible, I realize that we posted those items on the website for the MORE Commission yesterday. Hopefully, you've been able to obtain those, that proposed substitute language and your comments can relate to that proposed substitute language rather than what may be in the bill book itself at this point.

If you don't have that, or if that's not part of your testimony, obviously we do accept testimony after the public hearing. So if you'd like to supplement your comments today with written testimony that directly responds to that proposed substitute language, that would be helpful.

The other bill in the same category is Item Number 5. I should enumerate. These are items from the MORE Commission. They are Items 3, Senate Bill 197, Item 6, Senate Bill 303, Items 8, House Bill 5255, Item 11, House Bill 5336 and Item 12, House Bill 5337.

SB199

submittal are also posted on the website. The information is there, but there's a huge amount of information on our website and it may be difficult to slog through it and find it. I'd be happy to help any of your staff, or well, if anyone's interested in it, we can always provide it.

REP. FLEXER: Okay, because I'm actually looking at the budget for this year right now, and I was trying to scan through and find the breakdown for the administrative costs, and I was unable to locate it, but it would be helpful if someone could help me find that.

And I would hope that other folks who ask the question who perhaps don't have the title Representative before their name would have access to that same information.

TOM KIRK: They sure do. Thanks.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Other questions?

Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Kirk.

TOM KIRK: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Mayor Currey is next, followed by First Selectman Barlow.

MELODY CURREY: Mr. Chairman, if you would like, we could do it together. It might save you some time since we both are from CRUG.

SENATOR COLEMAN: We encourage joint testimony. (Inaudible).

MELODY CURREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of P&D. It's a pleasure to be here today. I'm here as Melody Currey, the Chair of CROG,

HB5255
HB5338
HB5336
SB144
SB159
SB394
HB5337

Mayor of the Town of East Hartford.

You have number of bills before you that CRUG has submitted testimony on, 5255, a municipal mandate relief, 5338, local plans of conservation and development.

I'd just like to say in relation to municipal mandate relief, legal notices alone being allowed to be put on the web as opposed to in newspapers would save between $80,000 to $100,000 in East Hartford alone, to just mention one.

Under House Bill 5336 AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED SERVICES, we have been the benefit of your legislation in the past and your grants to shared services, and we had money given to us two years ago, and we have been administering that to put together some shared services.

We've done items in the area of public safety. We have an exciting IT project going on now with our building and permits and we'll be available on line. We have nine communities, I believe, involved in that at the present moment, and eventually construction folks and homeowners will be able to go on line, fill out a permit, fill out all the information. In some cases, permits will actually be issued on line.

In some cases you'll be stopped to say you need to come into the office with your plans and designs, et cetera, forward whatever is there. But it will make it much easier for constituents, and that's really thanks to the benefit of the dollars we receive from the state.

We're doing things in the area of public

health and in public works also. But this bill would allow communities to share tax revenues also as a result of cooperative activities and that's something that could be very exciting for the future.

Under Senate Bill 144 AN ACT CONCERNING ENHANCED REGIONALISM, and Senate Bill 159 AN ACT CONCERNING INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION AND ENHANCED REGIONALISM, we once again support those.

And we want you to keep in mind that any time we have a municipal agreement coming together, we experience legal counsel fees, administrative time and planning time, and that's necessary for any shared services that we do, so in looking at it, we need to address that.

Now I'd like to move on to the topic that you've been hearing about in the previous speaker, and that is Senate Bill Number 394, and we are here in support of that bill to expend the membership of the board of CRRA to include elected municipal leaders, CEOs of towns.

We don't believe that it's an unwielding way to do it. We have created a method in which it would be handled and Dick Barlow, who's with me, the First Selectman from Canton has worked a great deal on this, and I'd just like to turn it over to him at this point.

RICHARD BARLOW: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Richard Barlow. I'm the First Selectman of the Town of Canton, and sitting before you I am the one first selectman that has appeared at a CRRA board meeting in the last several years. I've been first selectman

Are there questions for Mr. Fink?

Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

Barbara Henry is next.

BARBARA HENRY: Thank you. Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey, nice to see you again. Senator Fasano and Representative Aman and other distinguished members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity.

I'm here not only as the First Selectman of the Town of Roxbury, I am Vice President of COST and I also was a participant in the MORE Subcommittee that dealt with grants and mandates.

I have submitted testimony on many of these bills and my, Susan Bransfield has also spoken to several of them. I'd like to ditto what she said and speak to H.B. 5331 AN ACT AUTHORIZING MUNICIPALITIES TO JOIN IN STATE CONTRACTS FOR THE PURCHASES OF SERVICES. SB198 SB394

COST strongly supports this, as I do. It will provide towns with a mechanism for purchasing services at more competitive rates, resulting in much needed savings.

House Bill 5336 AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED SERVICES, again, we support this strongly, encouraging volunteer efforts to share services certainly makes a lot of sense in these times.

I see that you did change 5337 to only affect regional boards of education. I would ask that you put the municipalities back into that scenario and we would support that H.B. 5331. [HB5332]

appreciate it because I really don't know, but my instinct would say that over the, until the defined benefit section is more fully funded, the towns could actually be cash out of hand in the next several budgets, and this is not the right time to do that, even though in the long run it might be to their benefit.

GIAN-CARL CASA: I think that will vary according to municipalities, and if you look down the list that the comptroller produces of where towns are and value and having fulfilled their outstanding pension obligations, it's all over the map.

A lot of them, you know, are funded at 30 percent or 40 percent but others are funded at much higher levels, so it may play out differently, depending on the municipality and depending on the bargaining unit being discussed.

REP. AMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Other questions? Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Casa.

GIAN-CARL CASA: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Representative Russ Morin.

REP. MORIN: Good afternoon, Chairmen Sharkey and Coleman, ranking members and esteemed members of this committee. I guess I bring it back. This makes me feel like the movie Ground Hog Day. Anybody that's watching, I keep waking up and testifying in front of the P&D Committee about the hotel tax bill, so I very much appreciate the opportunity to be here with you.

SB303
SB197
HB5255
HB5336
HB5337

to make this work.

I think that now more than ever is the time for us to start thinking differently how we do business and originally both of you know that I was more, on the outset I was more on the home team keeping the funds, and as we worked through the process and listening to other people with different ideas, I've seen the light and realize that we really, if we want to grow we have to think outside of just what our own town's needs are and work on the region.

And so I appreciate the opportunity to work with many of the members here to look at different ways that we can work to get this through.

I won't speak on many of the other bills, but I will tell you, I do support Senate Bill 197, House Bill 5255, 5336 and 5337 amongst others. You have my written testimony and again, I really do appreciate the opportunity to speak in front of you today on this and I certainly hope that we can pass this this legislative session.

JEFF BRIDGES: Thank you, Representative. Thank you Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey for holding these hearings today, and deep appreciation to the MORE Commission for their hard work.

We are faced with a different time, and the MORE Committee, nothing but kudos for looking at these issues and working the issues for local units of government.

My comments are written. They're based upon an overwhelming expression of a need at the

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Testimony of

Barbara Henry, First Selectman, Town of Roxbury

On behalf of

Connecticut Council of Small Towns

Before the Planning & Development

March 10, 2010

RE: HB-5336, AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED SERVICES

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) ***supports*** **HB-5336,** which authorizes towns to enter into agreements for shared services.

Last year, COST supported legislation to provide state support for the shared purchase of capital equipment, which would have been very helpful in fostering regional efficiencies. Many small towns are finding it difficult to absorb the cost of new/replacement equipment needed to perform critical town services, such as plowing, mowing and fire trucks, etc. Encouraging voluntary efforts to share services certainly makes a lot of sense.

In addition to fostering regional cooperation between towns, Connecticut should look at ways of improving cooperation between the state and towns to share services. For example, towns should be eligible for reimbursement for plowing some of the state roads. Or, if the state is building a sand/salt shed in a town, the town should be eligible to share the use and cost of building and maintaining the sand/salt shed so that the town doesn't have to build a separate one.

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Capitol Region Council of Governments

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Web Page: www.crcog.org

DATE: MARCH 10, 2010

TO: CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: MELODY CURREY, CHAIRMAN, CRCOG POLICY BOARD
LYLE D. WRAY, PHD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: HOUSE BILL NO. 5336, AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED SERVICES

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) is a regional planning organization representing the City of Hartford and the 28 surrounding municipalities. We have served the region for over 30 years and helped them gain significant efficiencies in the spending of taxpayer dollars through cooperative purchasing and other regional service sharing initiatives.

We would like to remind the committee of our very successful efforts in the area of cooperative purchasing which have been helping municipalities since 1968. We have 81 members of the Capitol Region Purchasing Council today and are very proud of the savings we offer through our annual bids, energy procurement consortiums and indefinite quantity construction program. We also administer service sharing grants from the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management which have been instrumental in helping communities work together in the areas of public safety, IT, public health and public works. This is all in addition to our activities in community planning and transportation which help communities work together for the betterment of our region.

We believe the key missing component is a dedicated funding stream for municipalities to help them launch new areas of service sharing. From our experience, even the most simple of intermunicipal cooperative arrangements results in legal counsel fees, administrative time and planning time – all necessary for the due diligence CRCOG and its communities must perform to make sure these cooperative arrangements are best for their citizens. This bill would allow communities to share tax revenue as a result of cooperative activities.

We offer our support for this bill and encourage your favorable action.

Late W
submit 12:15

State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE ELISSA T. WRIGHT
41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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VICE CHAIRMAN
BANKS COMMITTEE

MEMBER
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY OF REPRESENTATIVE ELISSA WRIGHT
STATE REPRESENTATIVE, 41ST DISTRICT

Planning and Development Committee Public Hearing
March 10, 2010

In Support of:

Proposed Substitute Bill No. 303, An Act Concerning A Municipal Hotel Tax
Proposed Substitute Bill No. 197, An Act Concerning In-School Suspensions
Proposed Substitute Bill No. 5255, An Act Concerning Municipal Mandate Relief
Proposed Substitute Bill No 5336, An Act Concerning Shared Services
Proposed Substitute Bill No. 5337, An Act Authorizing Two or More Municipalities to Pursue Joint Employee Health Insurance Plans

Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey and members of the Planning and Development Committee:

Concerns about the current economic crisis and drastically altered state revenue streams resulting from the collapse of financial markets, the recession's severity, and the painfully slow economic recovery have focused the attention of lawmakers, local elected officials, policymakers, civic and business leaders on the urgent need to change the way the state and local governments deliver and fund services in the future, lowering government costs overall. In short, the status quo no longer exists.

During the past month, the Speaker's Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies has reviewed and evaluated a number of short- and longer-term approaches to promote money-saving, tax-reducing efficiences for Connecticut's cities and towns through cooperative and collaborative ventures, mandate relief, and revenue diversification with an eye to improve the value and effectiveness of state and local government programs. Several regional initiatives in such areas as online permitting and GIS mapping prompted through the regional performance incentive grant program, authorized under P.A. 07-239 An Act Concerning Responsible Growth, already have demonstrated success.

The above-referenced bills comprise a series of public policy instruments designed help guide Connecticut toward a smarter, more economically efficient, and socially desirable future.

This suite of bills addresses several areas of concern and offers specific, high-priority proposals for implementing action:

- Increase the state hotel occupancy tax rate to fifteen percent (from the current twelve percent). The Department of Revenue Services would segregate the additional revenues and allocate them as follows: one third to be returned to the hotel host towns; one-third distributed to all participating municipalities within the geographical region; and one-third distributed to councils of government, regional planning agencies, or councils of elected officials for use on cooperative, inter-municipal projects that deliver services more effectively and efficiently on a regional basis, to be decided by the chief elected officials of member municipalities under a process that is accountable and transparent.
- Authorize municipalities to set and charge fees to users of services provided by the municipality at rates reasonably set to allow the municipality to cover the administrative cost incurred in providing the service or collecting the fee.
- Establish a floor for depreciation of tangible personal property for municipal assessment purposes.
- Encourage collaboration through trans-boundary, shared-service agreements in the performance of such functions as school transportation, and school construction management services.
- Promote health care pooling for towns and boards of education and pooling for prescription drug insurance among Boards of Education
- Provide mandate relief from the requirement of online posting of municipal public agency meeting minutes, and from the recovery and storage requirement of evicted tenants' possessions. Suspend the effective date of the in-school suspension requirement by three years to July 1, 2013.

In conclusion, with fiscal costs spiraling and economic effects reverberating throughout the state, Connecticut, like many other states, is facing difficult decisions. Let us seize the moment and fashion a coordinated, integrated approach for improved service delivery among government jurisdictions; one that makes government more efficient and less expensive, strengthens our cities and towns, expands economic opportunities, and improves the state's competitive position.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters.

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WINDHAM REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Chaplin Columbia Coventry Hampton Lebanon Mansfield Scotland Willington Windham

Chairman Coleman
Chairman Sharkey
Members of the Planning & Development Committee

March 10, 2010

RE: Support for the following bills:

S. B. No. 144 AN ACT CONCERNING ENHANCED REGIONALISM.
S. B. No. 159 AN ACT CONCERNING INTERMUNICIPAL COOPERATION AND ENHANCED REGIONALISM.
S. B. No. 197 AN ACT CONCERNING IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS.
S. B. No. 198 AN ACT REQUIRING A TWO-THIRDS VOTE TO ENACT NEW MUNICIPAL MANDATES.
S. B. No. 199 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT.
S. B. No. 303 AN ACT CONCERNING A MUNICIPAL HOTEL TAX.
H. B. No. 5255 AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL MANDATE RELIEF.
H. B. No. 5257 AN ACT CONCERNING THE TERMINATION OF NEW MUNICIPAL MANDATES.
H. B. No. 5331 AN ACT AUTHORIZING MUNICIPALITIES TO JOIN IN STATE CONTRACTS FOR THE PURCHASE OF SERVICES.
H. B. No. 5336 AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED SERVICES.
H. B. No. 5337 AN ACT AUTHORIZING TWO OR MORE MUNICIPALITIES TO PURSUE JOINT EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE PLANS.
H. B. No. 5338 AN ACT CONCERNING LOCAL PLANS OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT.
H. B. No. 5031 AN ACT REDUCING COSTS TO MUNICIPALITIES.

Dear Chairman Coleman and Chairman Sharkey, and members of the Planning and Development Committee,

The Windham Region Council of Governments (WINCOG) is writing in support of the above legislation regarding Mandates, Regionalism, Taxes, and the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

Too often our municipalities are left with unfunded mandates, additional costs, and increased staff time as a result of legislative action. The contained bills, if implemented, will truly reduce town budgets, provide much needed revenue, enhance regionalism and, increase the efficiency of local and state government (much needed in these difficult economic times).

Thank you for your consideration in moving these bills forward.

Sincerely,

Mark N. Paquette
Executive Director, WINCOG

WINCOG. 700 Main Street. Willimantic, CT 06226. Phone: (860) 456-2221. Fax: (860) 456-5659. E-mail: director@wincog.org

neccog

northeastern connecticut council of governments

March 10, 2010

Testimony Regarding

- P. S. B. 144, **An Act Concerning Enhanced Regionalism**
- S. B. 159, **An Act Concerning Inter-municipal Cooperation And Enhanced Regionalism**
- S. B. 197, **An Act Concerning In-School Suspensions**
- S. B. 198, **An Act Requiring A Two-Thirds Vote To Enact New Municipal Mandates**
- S. B. 303, **An Act Concerning a Municipal Hotel Tax**
- H. B. 5255, **An Act Concerning Municipal Mandate Relief**
- H. B. 5257, **An Act Concerning The Termination Of New Municipal Mandates**
- H. B. 5331, **An Act Authorizing Municipalities To Join In State Contracts For The Purchase Of Services**
- H. B. 5336, **An Act Concerning Shared Services**
- H. B. 5337, **An Act Authorizing Two Or More Municipalities To Pursue Joint Employee Health Insurance Plans**
- H. B. 5383, **An Act Concerning Regional Economic Development**
- H. B. 5031, **An Act Reducing Costs to Municipalities**

Made before the

Planning and Development Committee

The Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) **SUPPORTS** the concepts put forth in the twelve proposals before the Committee today and urges the Committee's **favorable consideration.** Most of the proposals are the result of the **Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies** (MORE) **Commission** that Speaker Donovan created and Representative Sharkey lead. NECCOG participated in Phase I of the MORE Commission and will continue its participation in Phase II. The MORE process is a unique (and we hope one that will be repeated) approach to problem solving for our state – engaging local elected officials, regional representatives, business, unions and others with legislators to enhance dialogue between various interests and find solutions or at least the opportunity for solutions. We thank the Speaker for his leadership and Representative Sharkey for his tireless efforts in making the MORE Commission work.

NECCOG, as a regional organization of 12 municipalities, has a long history of embracing regionalism. This includes regional programs in **Engineering, Paramedic Intercept, Animal Services, GIS** and our newest venture in conducting **Revaluation** regionally. Our member towns are open to the possibilities that regionalism affords – not just in terms of savings, but from the efficiencies gained resulting in better services for our residents. The bills before you are an enhancement to our efforts and those being done and tried in other parts of our state.

Initial financing for regional and inter-municipal cooperation is a critical issue and present challenge to those seeking such opportunities. Proposed Senate Bill 144, **An Act Concerning Enhanced Regionalism,** Senate Bill 159, **An Act Concerning Inter-municipal Cooperation and Enhanced Regionalism** and Senate Bill 303, **An Act Concerning a Municipal Hotel Tax** would address the issue and greatly enhance our ability to pursue regional opportunities..

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Mandates (most of which are well intended) cost our towns considerable resources. Relief from the costs related to many of these can be of great financial benefit to our towns – especially during the financial situation we find our state in at this time. House Bill 5031, **An Act Reducing Costs to Municipalities** (introduced by the Governor), House Bill 5255, **An Act Concerning Municipal Mandate Relief**, House Bill 5257, **An Act Concerning The Termination Of New Municipal Mandates**, Senate Bill 197, **An Act Concerning In-School Suspensions**, and Senate Bill 198, **An Act Requiring A Two-Thirds Vote To Enact New Municipal Mandates** seek to address the mandate issue for municipalities. We do wish to emphasize that some mandates (such as the in-school suspensions) have a strong policy basis and should not simply be thrown aside due only to financial implications to towns. We need to work together to find affordable/effective ways to address the issues that resulted in the mandates.

As noted earlier, NECCOG is a strong advocate and practitioner of regionalism. We strongly support initiatives that enhance those efforts. House Bill 5331, **An Act Authorizing Municipalities To Join In State Contracts For The Purchase Of Services**, House Bill 5336, **An Act Concerning Shared Services**, House Bill 5337, **An Act Authorizing Two Or More Municipalities To Pursue Joint Employee Health Insurance Plans** and House Bill 5383, **An Act Concerning Regional Economic Development** each furthers efforts and opportunities to enhance regionalism.

Regionalism provides the opportunity for the towns of our state to save resources and enhance the delivery of services to the people of our state. Much is being done through our RPO's, RESC's, and between towns on a formal and informal basis.

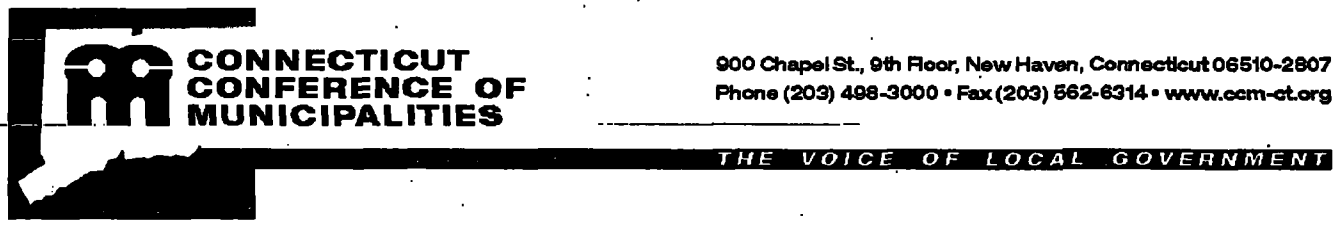
> *Successful regionalism will have to come from grass-roots efforts among municipalities to work together, not a top-down mandate to change. Toward that end, efforts are best focused on devising systematic incentives to encourage cooperation.*
>
> "Forum: Why regionalism is so hard" by Christopher Briem, Sunday, July 09, 2006, Pittsburg Post Gazette

What we need in Connecticut is the environment to allow the opportunity of regionalism to flourish. The bills under consideration today further that goal – we urge your favorable consideration.

Thank you.

For More information, please contact:

John Filchak, NECCOG Executive Director
860-774-1253
John.filchak@neccog.com



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TESTIMONY

of the

CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES

to the

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

March 10, 2010

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 93% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on the following bill of interest to towns and cities:

R.B. 5336, "An Act Concerning Shared Services"

R.B. 5383, "An Act Concerning Regional Economic Development"

CCM supports these bills.

R.B. 5383 would allow the formation of regional economic development districts by regional and other entities, and establish the authority of such districts. The bill would also allow such districts to be eligible for state grants and bond funds.

R.B. 5336 would allow regional economic development districts to enter into shared agreements.

These bills would ensure that regions are able to tap into federal funds that encourage smarter regional economic development.

CCM urges the committee to favorably report this bill.

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If you have any questions, please call Ron Thomas or Gian-Carl Casa of CCM at (203) 498-3000.

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