CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES

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THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

TESTIMONY

of the

CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES

to the

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

March 3, 2008

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities appreciates the opportunity to testify on the following bill of interest to towns and cities:

R.B. 5674, "An Act Concerning the Powers of Regional Councils of Government"

R.B. 5674 is complementary to CCM's proposal to provide incentives for regional planning organizations (RPOs) to become COGs.

The bill would allow regional councils of government to impose a surcharge on any tax that is collected in the region.

In addition to providing COGs with taxing authority, CCM recommends the following:

- Municipalities be *clearly authorized to share local property tax revenue*, particularly when it results from joint efforts at economic development.

- *Allow COGs to share a portion of the sales tax generated within their regions*. Sales tax revenues are an ideal funding mechanism for regional cooperation because allocation of funds by the COGs would reflect spending choices by the residents of the region. Also, it has a proven track record: most, if not all, of the other states that have authorized regional 'asset' expenditures use the State sales tax as the funding source.

- The State pay for *one-time capital expenditures for equipment for joint municipal undertakings*. For example, if a group of municipalities wanted to share tax, data and

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- information technology the State could pay for the hardware; the State could also buy fire-fighting equipment when it is to be shared by a group of municipalities, rather than having each municipality (even very small ones) buying their own expensive trucks and other equipment. Similarly, State support for shared capital facilities would be a major incentive (e.g. dog pounds, firehouses, and even schools and sewer treatment projects).

- *COGs be authorized to bond for capital projects* that would benefit the entire region.

- COGs be granted the *authority to work jointly on planning and zoning issues, and to make regional land-use decisions.*

- Regions be granted *the ability to negotiate master contracts* for their teachers and municipal employees.

- The General Assembly *review collective bargaining and other labor-law impediments to joint service delivery.*

This proposal works best after RPOs have been provided other incentives to become COGs.

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If you have any questions, please call Ron Thomas, CCM's Manager of State and Federal Relations, or Gian-Carl Casa, CCM Director of Legislative Services, at (203) 498-3000.