

HB5290

Good Afternoon,

My name is Scott R. Lingenfelter, I reside in West Suffield, CT and I am the First Selectman of the Town of Suffield.

Suffield hosts the MacDougall and Walker Correctional Institutions. Connecticut General Statutes §12-19a presently requires that every town which hosts a correctional institution receives a grant equal to 100% of the property taxes that would be received for the facility. Today the Planning and Development Committee is looking to increase that grant to 120% of the taxes that would be due to the municipality. I applaud this Committee for looking at this issue and encourage the increase to 120%, since the Towns have foregone the possible development of this land by businesses which would greatly benefit these towns. Therefore a grant in the amount of 120% would make the towns who host these institutions closer to whole.

The problem lies in the enforcement of this proposed bill. The reason I say that is because Towns such as Suffield, Somers, Niantic and others who host correctional facilities currently read §12-19a and expect to receive a grant in the amount of 100% of the property taxes that would be paid. Unfortunately we have seen this grant decrease almost annually, and we have not received the full 100% for at least the past seven years. In the 2000-2001 Fiscal Year we received 95% reimbursement for our facility, that amount has decreased almost annually to 77%. This is unacceptable. The law requires that we receive 100%, but the law is not being obeyed.

Before we look to increase the payment in the Connecticut General Statutes, we need to first assure that the State of Connecticut is held to a standard of obeying the very laws that it drafts. I would love to get excited about the possibility here today of receiving a grant equal to 120%, but I first need some assurance that we will get what we are promised and what is due to us.

Prior the initial construction of our facility and the subsequent expansion of that facility the Town of Suffield was promised a grant equal to 100% of the property taxes that we are due. We relied on that promise. We still expect the State of Connecticut to follow through on that promise. We now ask for an assurance that we receive what is promised. We ask that the Legislature require that the State of Connecticut uphold its own laws. Pay us the money that is due to us.

On behalf of the Town of Suffield, I encourage the passing of Proposed Bill No. 5290. But don't stop at simply passing this Proposed Bill. Follow through on it. Assure that the funds that are promised to communities such as Suffield and others are paid in full. As a taxpayer, I would not be allowed to get away with paying 77% of what I owe. I expect the State of Connecticut to hold itself to the same standard that it places on its residents and I ask you to assure that the State of Connecticut pays 100% of what it owes to its municipalities.

Thank you very much for your time today.