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Planning and Development Committee

March 3, 2008

Testimony of Martin Mador

In Favor of

HB 5673 AAC The Powers of Regional Councils of Government

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the Legislative and Political Chair of the Connecticut Sierra Club, and am here today representing our 10,000 Connecticut members concerned about the health of our environment. I possess a Master's of Environmental Management degree from Yale.

Connecticut has a significant problem with our lack of a coherent and beneficial land use policy. "Sprawl" and "Smart Growth" are negative and positive synonyms for this land use issue. Much of the problem derives from our fragmentation of planning and decision making amount 169 jurisdictions, with, at best, minimal regional oversight. Excessive reliance on income from property taxes pits town against town, and drives them to make destructive land use decisions.

Sierra agrees with 1000 Friends of Connecticut that regional government must be developed in the state to adequately address these issues. This bill encourages towns to work together with neighboring towns in their Council of Government (COG). As such, it is good policy, and Sierra endorses it. However, as the bill contains no incentives of any sort to encourage such cooperation, we are concerned that the results will be meager. We would prefer that economic incentives from the state, such as higher priorities for state grants, be added.