

6582



**TESTIMONY**

of the

**CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES**

to the

**COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC HEALTH,  
INSURANCE & REAL ESTATE, AND HUMAN SERVICES**

March 2, 2009

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local governments - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 93% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to testify before you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

**H. B. 6582, "An Act Establishing The Connecticut Healthcare Partnership".**

This bill would, among other things, provide municipalities with the option of enrolling their employees in the state's health insurance program.

The high cost of providing health care to municipal employees is hurting towns and cities across Connecticut. Two years ago CCM formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Municipal Health Care Costs to discuss the present cost-related problems, and to generate ideas for assisting municipalities in coping with them. The Committee's report - endorsed by CCM's Board of Directors and Legislative Committee discusses the problems municipalities face in finding affordable health insurance, steps they have taken to address those costs, and makes recommendations for State action that can help local governments.

One important aspect of those recommendations is to provide local governments with options of which they can voluntarily avail themselves, including through state programs. This bill provides such an option.

Last session there was much discussion and concern about whether this legislation would be mandatory on the part of municipalities. Speaker Donovan and other proponents met several times with CCM and we agreed on the compromise that is found in section 4 of the bill - that "initial participation...shall be a permissive subject of collective bargaining and shall be subject to binding interest arbitration only if the collective bargaining agent and the [municipal] employer agree", in writing, to bargain over the topic.

That provision allows municipalities to decide for themselves whether they want to bargain over participation in the pool. It gives them the option, it does not force their hand. It's voluntary.

Municipalities will best be able to control rising health care costs if they have before them a menu of options so they can choose what works for their specific situation - including intermunicipal pooling, the Comptroller's plan for an "Enhanced MEHIP" program and the option of joining the state employee pool.

*We urge you to favorably report this bill.*

## ## ##

For more information, please contact Gian-Carl Casa or Jim Finley  
(gcasa@ccm-ct.org, jfinley@ccm-ct.org) or by phone (203) 498-3000.