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Good Morning Chairman Coleman, Chairman Sharkey, Senator Fasano, Representative Aman and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee. On behalf of the House Republican Caucus I would like to thank you for holding this very important public hearing.

There are a number of bills on your agenda today that I support. HB 5537, HB 5550, and SB 394 all attempt to address in one way or another the issue of unfunded mandates on our municipalities. When we write laws requiring our towns and cities to do certain things, it costs them money. And, those costs are passed on to property tax payers. Especially now, homeowners cannot understand how their property taxes could increase, while the value of their homes is going down. This rightfully makes no sense to homeowners.

The adoption of this bill would encourage the General Assembly to take a harder look at the financial impact of state mandates on local governments, and ultimately homeowners. A two-thirds vote would require overwhelming support of the General Assembly and ensure that these mandates are sufficiently scrutinized and that only the most necessary state mandates are imposed on local governments.

One example of a state mandate is a requirement that all suspensions of students be in-school suspensions. This mandate is scheduled to go into effect on July 1st of this year if no action is taken to prevent it. I support House Bill 5526, An Act Concerning In-School Suspensions. HB 5526 would delay the implementation of this mandate until 2012. We have all heard from our towns that as important as it is to keep students in school while serving disciplinary suspensions, some towns simply can afford neither the space, nor the cost of employing staff to implement this law. Delaying the

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implementation of in-school suspension until 2012 may sound small, but the associated cost-saving will certainly help ease the financial burden that our towns and cities are experiencing.

It is vital that during these tough economic times the legislature does everything it can to help local governments tackle their fiscal problems. Local governments are being forced to find ways to make ends meet, such as cutting services and increasing revenue. The legislature needs to do everything in its power to help local governments continue to provide important services to our constituents.

Again, I would like to thank the Chairs for raising these bills and holding this public hearing. I urge the committee to favorably report these bills out of committee for the consideration of the full General Assembly

Thank you. If you have any questions I would be happy to answer them at this time.