



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Testimony Presented to the Planning and Development Committee by  
W. David LeVasseur, Under Secretary  
Intergovernmental Policy Division of the Office of Policy and Management

March 6, 2009

In Support of Raised Bill No. 6595  
An Act Concerning the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan

---

Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 6595 - An Act Concerning the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan.

As you know, the provisions of §16a-27 through §16a-29 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) outline a recurring five-year process by which the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) prepares revisions to the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan (State C&D Plan) before it is considered for approval by the General Assembly. Currently, these statutes require OPM to:

- Submit an initial Draft State C&D Plan by September 1, 2008 to the Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development (Continuing Committee) for a 90-day review;
- Publish a revised Draft State C&D Plan by March 1, 2009, and hold public hearings across the state to solicit comments over the following 5-month period; and
- Submit a recommended Draft State C&D Plan to the Continuing Committee by December 1, 2009 after considering public comments.

Sections 1, 2 and 3 of this bill would amend these statutes to extend OPM's deadlines for submission to the Continuing Committee by one year. Pursuant to CGS §16a-30, the Continuing Committee would then hold a public hearing on the Draft State C&D Plan within 45 days of the start of the 2011 session. If adopted during the 2011 session, the next State C&D Plan would cover the period 2011-2016 instead of 2010-2015.

Last summer, I met with the Co-Chairs of the Planning and Development Committee to discuss several issues that could impede OPM's ability to conduct a thorough and comprehensive update of the State C&D Plan within the current statutory timeframe. I summarized those issues in a letter to the full Continuing Committee on August 29, 2008, and requested consideration of a one-year extension to allow OPM sufficient time to address the following issues.

- OPM believes that information in the State Economic Strategic Plan that the Department of Economic and Community Development must publish by July, 1, 2009, pursuant to CGS §32-10, will be important to consider in recommending the delineation of the boundaries of priority funding areas in the State C&D Plan, as required by CGS §16a-35c.
- Several municipalities are in the process of updating their local plans of conservation and development (POCD), in accordance with CGS §8-23. OPM utilizes information from municipal POCDs when it updates the State C&D Plan, so current information is often a critical factor in terms of the consistency between the state and local plans. In August 2008, OPM provided grants to twenty-five municipalities with the oldest POCDs to help them meet their statutory obligations under CGS §8-23, with the intent of having that current information available to OPM for the next State C&D Plan.
- CGS §16a-27 requires OPM to establish three benchmarks for each of the six Growth Management Principles in the State C&D Plan, and to set priorities for the various policies contained therein.

Sufficient additional time will be needed to develop broad consensus on these benchmarks and priorities, since they will become important tools for measuring the effectiveness of future state-sponsored actions.

- The Continuing Committee has dealt with a number of interim change requests in recent years concerning the extension of public sanitary sewers. I believe that many of these interim changes to the State C&D Plan's Locational Guide Map could have been avoided if the state had more current sewer service data. To that end, OPM has partnered with the 15 Regional Planning Organizations to update the statewide sewer service data that is currently over ten years old.
- Given the number of new requirements regarding the State C&D Plan since it was last adopted by the General Assembly in 2005, OPM would appreciate the opportunity to meet with the Continuing Committee well in advance of our September 1, 2009 anticipated submittal of the initial Draft 2011-2016 State C&D Plan. By coordinating early on issues of mutual interest, OPM staff will have a better sense of the Committee's ideas for the future direction of the plan.

My staff and I met with the Continuing Committee on October 7, 2008 to discuss these and other issues concerning the State C&D Plan revision process. Sections 1 through 3 of Raised Bill No. 6595 seeks to formalize the outcome of that discussion.

Section 4 of this bill would amend CGS §16a-32a by eliminating OPM's current requirement to issue periodic reports on the net amount of carbon dioxide emitted annually within Connecticut. OPM believes that this reporting requirement is redundant, since CGS §22a-200b(f) requires DEP to publish an inventory of all greenhouse gas emissions in the state and carbon dioxide is one of the greenhouse gases included in this inventory. In lieu of the OPM reporting requirement, Section 4 includes new language that is intended to ensure that the State C&D Plan goal for reducing carbon dioxide emissions is consistent with the Connecticut Climate Change Action Plan. In order to clarify this intent, I respectfully request that lines 96 through 98 be replaced with the following:

"consistent with the recommendations of the Connecticut Climate Change Action Plan prepared in accordance with section 22a-200a."

Section 5 of this bill would amend CGS §8-23(b) to provide a measure of fiscal relief to several municipalities that may be adversely affected by the statutory prohibition regarding receipt of discretionary state funding. Specifically, this section of the bill would postpone the date by which municipalities can be deemed ineligible for such discretionary funding if they do not have a current 10-year plan of conservation and development adopted in accordance with §8-23(b). This bill would extend the current statutory deadline from July 1, 2010 until the July 1 that follows the adoption of the next State C&D Plan, in order to ensure that no municipality is threatened with the loss of discretionary state funding during the challenging economic times we face.

Finally, please note that there appears to have been an inadvertent drafting error in the reference to "2012" on line 107. With the extension for which the bill provides, we anticipate that the next five-year State C&D Plan will be for the period 2011-2016. There, I respectfully request that the reference to "2012" on line 107, be changed to "2016."

This bill will allow OPM to use more current and comprehensive data than is now available in completing the next update of the State C&D Plan. The bill also protects municipalities from a loss of discretionary state funding that would occur due to changing the State C&D Plan's next submission date. For these reasons, I urge you to provide a joint favorable substitute report with respect to this bill, after reflecting my requested changes.

I look forward to working with members of both the Planning and Development Committee and the Continuing Committee in the coming weeks and months to address any specific issues you might have concerning this bill, as well as with the State C&D Plan revision process in general.