



**TESTIMONY
ELIZABETH GARA
CONNECTICUT WATER WORKS ASSOCIATION (CWWA)
BEFORE THE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MARCH 16, 2009**

RE: HB-6655, AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZATION OF STATE GRANT COMMITMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS AND CONCERNING CHANGES TO THE STATUTES CONCERNING SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS

Given the current stress on local budgets, The Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA) understands that local communities are facing difficulties in meeting their obligation to provide adequate educational facilities for students.

Because of the long and short-term costs associated with installing, replacing, operating and maintaining wells or alternative sewage systems, public water companies are sometimes approached by school districts to determine whether it is feasible for a school building project to tie into public water or wastewater lines. As community water systems, water utilities are required by state and federal law to provide a safe and adequate supply of potable water to customers and are required to regularly test for contaminants and remediate any contamination issues, as well as address any other water quality and availability issues.

School building projects that install their own water systems must bear the cost of such testing and remediation. Moreover, under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, such systems, which are considered non-community water systems, are not required to test for certain contaminants, such as uranium, which may pose health concerns for consumers. In addition, alternative sewage disposal systems raise concerns with consumers as well and there have been ongoing issues regarding their regulation. As a result, many school districts look for opportunities to tie into a public water supply system or public sewer system, where feasible.

Unfortunately, under the current law, off-site improvements of utility extensions are considered ineligible costs, even where it may be more cost-effective and prudent, forcing districts to pursue other on-site options that may be less desirable and more costly.

CWWA therefore urges committee members to consider incorporating the following language into HB-6655 to address this inequity:

In the computation of grants pursuant to Section 10-286, CGS, towns may be reimbursed for costs for off-site extensions and improvements of water and sewer systems up to the amount that they would otherwise be eligible for reimbursement for water supply and sanitary systems for the school through on-site water and wastewater systems.

This would provide school districts with greater flexibility by allowing reimbursement for costs for off-site extensions and improvements of water and sewer systems up to the amount that would otherwise have been authorized for on-site systems where they determine that access to public water or sewer systems is in the interest of public health and safety and more cost effective for their community.

CWWA would be pleased to work with the committee in addressing this issue more fully.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please contact CWWA's Executive Director, Elizabeth Gara, at 860-547-0566.

The Connecticut Water Works Association, Inc. (CWWA) is an association of private, municipal and regional public water supply utilities serving more than 500,000 customers, or population of about 2½ million people, located throughout Connecticut. CWWA is committed to working with the state to develop policies that will ensure that Connecticut has a safe, ample supply of water to meet present and future needs.