



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE February 11, 2009

Ellen Blaschinski, Regulatory Services Branch 509-8171

House Bill 5255 - An Act Concerning Watershed Lands

The Department of Public Health provides the following information with regard to House Bill 5255.

This bill **would have a significant fiscal impact on DPH** by requiring the creation of an entirely new program within DPH. Appropriate staffing would be needed for the Department to have the ability to draft the policies, procedures, and regulations required by this bill and implement the review and approval process as proposed.

The Department has existing statutes, regulations and initiatives in place for the protection of drinking water sources and public health. The Department is supportive of source water protection for public drinking water sources; however, this bill would eliminate local authority and local oversight of development proposals within public water supply watersheds and aquifer protection areas by placing state review for local projects ahead of local review without any provision for local input.

The bill's language, as proposed, is unclear as to what is meant by the terms "water company land", "watersheds", and "watershed lands" and whether or not these terms, as used, refer to similar existing terms defined in the CGS. Pending clarification, this bill could be in conflict with existing aquifer protection area statutes and regulations which have already established a statewide protection program for such areas.

The Department believes that Bill 5255 is premature given that the outcome of Special Act 06-6 is not yet available. SA 06-6 requires the development of a watershed protection plan and that DPH prepare a report for the legislature. This report will be available in March 2009. The report will describe a Drinking Water Quality Management Plan (DWQMP) for southeastern Connecticut and will identify needed modifications to existing statutes to strengthen drinking water source protection. The report is presently under review by DPH, DEP, DPUC, and OPM. The Department fully supports the Southeastern CT DWQMP being locally developed in partnership with the Towns of Norwich, Waterford, Ledyard, Groton, Montville, and Preston, and the City of Groton Utilities.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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