

Written testimony of  
Columbia Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz to the  
Planning and Development Committee.  
Monday, March 1, 2010  
10:30 AM, Room 2b of the Legislative Office Building

Good Morning. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SENATE BILL 244: AN ACT VALIDATING THE NOVEMBER 3, 2009, REFERENDUM IN THE TOWN OF COLUMBIA REGARDING REVISIONS TO THE CHARTER OF THE TOWN OF COLUMBIA.

I am here today to express my support for SENATE BILL 244.

According to the Connecticut Secretary of State's Office, the Charter at issue was approved by the Columbia voters on November 3, 2009 by a vote of 573 to 351. As it now stands, the Charter is unable to become effective due to the Town of Columbia's failure to meet the statutory requirement of publishing the proposed Charter in a local newspaper prior to vote. The failure to publish in a local newspaper was an oversight. The Town did make available in abundant supply copies of the proposed Charter in both the Columbia Town Clerk's Office and local library. Copies at both locations were provided well in advance of the vote on the Charter.

I believe that the Charter recently voted on makes three notable changes to the Town of Columbia's Government. First, the Charter calls for the Town's Fiscal Manager to be hired/discharged by the Columbia Board of Selectmen and supervised by the Columbia Town Administrator. Under the existing Charter, the authority to hire/dischARGE the Fiscal Manager is shared by the Columbia Board of Selectmen and Columbia Board of Education, while the supervision of the Fiscal Manger is a duty shared by the Columbia Town Administrator and Columbia School Superintendent. Second, the Charter calls for the combining of the Agricultural Commission and Conservation Commission. Third, the Charter provides the Board of Selectmen greater authority with respect to applying for grants.

In consideration of the fact that the changes to the Charter are minor, and in consideration of the fact that the Town of Columbia made publically available ample copies of the proposed Charter via the Town Clerk's Office and local library, I express my support for Senate Bill 244.