

5295

# TOWN OF SPRAGUE

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Good morning. I'm Cathy Osten, First Selectman for the Town of Sprague. Thank you for giving me the opportunity today to encourage you to pass Raised Bill No 5295 that allows municipalities to participate in the state employees' prescription drug plan. Sprague is one of many small, rural towns that are considered distressed municipalities, and with a population of 3,000, it is extremely difficult to provide quality services to our residents on a full-time basis. The cost of insurance for our employees is rising in double digits—nearly 15% this year alone, while our cost of living raises have remained at 3% at maximum. The only way that a town of our size and tax base, with its necessarily bare-bones budget, can address these costs is by either eliminating insurance coverage or eliminating jobs. Passing this bill, which will cost the state no additional money, will help stabilize rising insurance costs and preserve job loss in a town with an already high percentage of unemployed and underemployed residents.

I want to thank the members of the Committee on Insurance and Real Estate who introduced this bill, and encourage you to also consider its expansion to allow small businesses and local "mom and pop" stores to take advantage of this plan. In this way state and local government can demonstrate in a small but significant way that it supports the preservation of jobs and economic development, as well as the health of the many small communities that comprise the majority of the citizens of the state. Thank you for your time.