



TESTIMONY
of the
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
to the
COMMERCE COMMITTEE

February 15, 2011

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 93% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony to you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

CCM supports Raised Bill 901 *"An Act Concerning the Appointment of a Municipal Ombudsmen within the Department of Economic and Community Development"* but urges the committee to take it a step further.

This bill would require that the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development assign a "municipal ombudsman" that interacts regularly and directly with local governments to improve coordination for economic development and planning.

CCM urges this proposal to be extended to all state agencies.

A municipal ombudsman would be a *no-cost* way for the state to ensure that local officials (similar to legislators) can navigate the complex bureaucracies that make up our state agencies. This does not need to be a new position; rather an existing position – such as the legislative liaisons – could be tapped for filling such role.

In addition, CCM would urge you to take this proposal a step further to increase efficiencies, minimize redundancies, and reduce costs on both the state and local level.

Our members have told us time and again about the delays and problems many projects experience when trying to navigate the bureaucratic permitting process through multiple state agencies. Municipal leaders and developers both have explained that the approval processes, with requirements that are either duplicative or counter to each other, can be so long that projects can flounder and sometimes are abandoned.

Creating "teams" for these projects that at least include key representatives from the applicable agencies, municipality, and the developer; would allow permit applications and

requirements to be processed simultaneously where applicable, with attention paid to redundant or contrary requirements; and, coordination between agencies. This would go a long way towards improving the state-local partnership for economic development and the completion of important projects. In addition, it could help rid our state of the reputation as a place where economic development projects go to die.

In order to truly streamline the permitting process between the state and municipalities, CCM urges the Committee to **amend this proposal** to **(1) require a municipal ombudsman be assigned in all state agencies, and (2) to require state agencies to work collaboratively on permit applications** when permitting requirements fall within multiple state agencies.

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If you have any questions, please contact Donna Hamzy, Legislative Associate of CCM via email dhamzy@ccm-ct.org or via phone (203) 843-0705.