



# WINDHAM REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Chaplin Columbia Coventry Hampton Lebanon Mansfield Scotland Willington Windham

Chairman Hartley  
Chairman Dargan  
Members of the Planning & Development Committee

February 22, 2011

RE: **S.B. No. 1017** AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY AND THE BOARD OF FIREARMS PERMIT EXAMINERS INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Dear Chairman Hartley and Chairman Dargan,  
and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

The Windham Region Council of Governments (WINCOG) is writing about it's concern with the **proposed merger of DEMHS and DPS**, as noted in the above bill.

While we support the legislative's efforts to streamline and make state government more efficient, there is a real concern that this DEMHS/DPS merger will not provide the cost savings as expected. Here's why:

- Five years ago DEMHS was part of DPS and the legislature created the current stand-alone agency, as this was at that time, a more efficient and effective model.
- DEMHS's current state funding is \$3.9 million, matched by \$50 million in federal funding. DEMHS oversees more than \$230 million in grant funding. Federal regulations note that if the **State Administrative Agency** is changed, all grant funds stop, they must be returned, and it can take over 12-14 months to begin funding again under the new agency. Significant programs will come to a complete standstill.
- Finally, with the small investment by the state, matched by the federal grant funds, surely the same efficiency that can be realized by a merger can be more efficiently realized by allowing DEMHS to stand alone as an agency.

WINCOG, along with other RPO's, have been a part of this regional collaboration model and know first hand how effective it is. Please give strong consideration to keeping DEMHS a separate agency, as sometimes bigger is not always better!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark N. Paquette  
Executive Director, WINCOG