Statement by:
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Grants Administrator
City of Waterbury

On:
Raised Bill No. 440

Before:
Committee on Planning and Development

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members. I am Kathleen McNamara, City of Waterbury Grants Administrator, and it is my pleasure to appear before you as a representative of the Office of the Mayor.

Today, I am voicing the City's support for Raised Bill No. 440, "An Act Authorizing Amounts in the Clean Water Fund to be used or Phosphorus Removal." In the last several years, USEPA has devoted increasing attention to the reduction of the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus by waste water treatment plants (WWTPs) in order to address excess nutrient levels that impair water quality in lakes and U.S. coastal waters. In fact, nutrients are considered "pollutants' regulated by USEPA under the Clean Water Act. USEPA has mandated that states establish limitations on phosphorus in all wastewater discharge permits for non-coastal surface water discharges.

While some may debate the levels of allowed discharge - whether it be 0.7mg/L or 0.2mg/L, it is clear that the imposition of numeric nutrient criteria (NNC) is not going away and that it will be extremely costly to the towns and cities of Connecticut - in some cases costing tens of millions of dollars to communities. In the case of Waterbury, costs are estimated at $45 million to institute the appropriate plant upgrades. Similar concerns are being raised by communities around the country as they face gigantic bills for upgrades to relatively new plants whose initial construction is often not yet paid off.

When the original language in 22a-278 (c) (3) was drafted, phosphorus was not the concern it is today. Consequently, phosphorus removal was not included as an eligible project for Clean Water Fund moneys. Addition of language to make phosphorus removal eligible for Clean Water funding will ensure that Connecticut cities and towns will be able to access the highest level of grant-to-loan funding available, as they face the staggering costs of mandated reductions or removals. The City of Waterbury therefore asks for the Committee's support of Raised Bill 440.