

## **Testimony to the Energy and Technology Committee**

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### **Testimony Regarding House Bill 5544**

#### **An Act Concerning Storm Preparation and Emergency Response**

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Senator Fonfara, Representative Nardello, and distinguished members of the Energy and Technology Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding House Bill No 5544, An Act Concerning Storm Preparation and Emergency Response.

This testimony is directed specifically toward Section 8 of the bill which would require the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority to coordinate with the Connecticut Geospatial Information Systems Council to develop a geographic information system (GIS) based map of electric transmission facilities in the State. Clearly, GIS technology can be a powerful tool to aid in the State's preparation, response, and recovery related to storms and other emergencies. However, Section 8 of this bill appears to be duplicative to some efforts that are already underway, specifically those that Governor Malloy has directed State Agencies to do in the wake of the two storms.

Immediately following the October snowstorm, the GIS Council established a work group to evaluate how GIS technology was used during both storms and to identify ways to enhance its use moving forward. Much of this work has helped to determine the types of information, tools, personnel, and workflows, necessary to support enhanced use of GIS technology during emergencies. In addition, Governor Malloy has directed the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to work with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to gather and synthesize critical GIS data that can be used to support emergency situations.

Through the Governor's Emergency Planning and Preparedness Initiative, OPM is heading a technology work group that includes municipalities, state agencies, utilities, and others to better integrate GIS technology in to emergency preparedness and planning, as well as improve communications and the flow of information. Finally, Governor Malloy also directed the Department of Administrative Services, Bureau of Enterprise Systems and Technology to expand access to the GIS platform to key state agencies in order to facilitate broader use of GIS

technology. This platform has been significantly upgraded, and will be available for use within the next two weeks.

In addition, I would like to direct your attention to two other bills that relate to HB 5544.

**HB 5027: An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning the Elimination, Consolidation and Modification of Various Boards and Commissions**

Governor Malloy has proposed to review and reconsider whether state boards and commissions serving their original purpose, are duplicative, or have completed their intended tasks,, one which being the Geospatial Information Systems Council. While the intent of the Council is to improve the coordination of GIS technology across state and local government, a clear problem emerged during the investigations into the two storms. The issue was that no state agency had clearly defined authority or responsibility for such coordination. In effect, the Council advised no one, and no agency could carry out Council related initiatives or recommendations. HB 5027 seeks to improve that coordination by placing that responsibility and authority within OPM. Since GIS technology is used broadly across multiple sectors, it seems appropriate for OPM to assume this role.

**Senate Bill 426, An Act Concerning Geographic Information System Data Sharing**

This bill would require electric companies in the State to submit the same type of information to PURA, which Section 8 of HB 5544 seeks to collect.

I would like to thank the Committee again for the opportunity to present testimony on this bill. I urge you to build off several of the initiatives already underway by modifying Section 8 of this bill to charge OPM to coordinate with PURA, rather than the GIS Council; or to eliminate it entirely and defer to SB 426.