

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

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Testimony Supporting House Bill No. 6354

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS
CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill No. 6354, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government.

This bill proposes a number of changes required to implement the budget proposed by the Governor. A brief summary of the bill follows:

Secs. 1-13 - Transfer Functions of Office of Health Reform to Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange

The bill transfers the functions of the Office of Health Reform and Innovation in the Lieutenant Governor's office to Access Health CT, Connecticut's health insurance exchange, to effect more coordinated health planning strategies and activities. Proposed language also changes the composition of the health exchange board by adding the Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services as an ex-officio board member.

Sec. 14 - Eliminate the Requirement to Supply Potable Water

This eliminates the requirement for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to supply potable water for those that are affected by contaminated water supplies in CGS 22a-471. By eliminating the requirement, the responsibility for potable water or maintenance to treatment systems will be with the homeowner.

Sec. 15 - Renters' Rebate Program

I would like to recommend a minor correction to Section 15 of the bill, which includes language to freeze intake into the Renters' Rebate Program. The correction is as follows:

Delete lines 1390 and 1393 in their entirety and insert "Only those applicants who received a payment for the 2011 calendar year under this program shall be eligible to apply for grants under this program. Applicants who do not receive a payment under this program in any calendar year subsequent to the 2011 calendar year are no longer eligible to apply for grants under this program. (Effective April 1, 2013)"

Sec. 16 - Owner Controlled Insurance Programs

This change repeals language prohibiting construction projects from utilizing Owner Controlled Insurance Programs (OCIP). By eliminating that prohibition, both the state and municipalities have the option of utilizing OCIP, which we believe will serve as a cost avoidance mechanism.

Sec. 17 - Film Industry Program

This section eliminates a reference to the film industry program, as funding for this program is eliminated.

Secs. 18-52 - Merger of the Department of Construction Services into the Department of Administrative Services

These sections transfer the functions of the Department of Construction Services to the Department of Administrative Services. This includes facilities design and construction as well as school construction. This consolidation will align all construction functionalities along with property management programs, thereby promoting knowledge sharing and streamlining operations. The management of construction projects for CSU and CTC is transferred to Board Regents, and Vocational Technical High School project management is transferred to the State Department of Education.

Secs. 53-56 - Transfer Management of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines' Fund to the American Legion

The Soldiers, Sailors and Marines' Fund, established in 1919, provides veterans and their families with temporary assistance for rental or mortgage interest payments, utility and medical bills, prescription costs, and funeral expenses. Since 1937, the investment and custody of the fund, currently valued at \$58.9 million, has been the responsibility of the State of Connecticut. Additionally, the state appropriates an operating budget of approximately \$3 million for the associated agency, including funding for salaries, benefits, supplies and award payments to veterans. These sections remove the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines' Fund (SSMF) from the list of trust funds held or invested by the Office of the State Treasurer. These sections also transfer the management, investment responsibility and associated operational costs of the SSMF to the American Legion, the legal administrator of the Fund.

Sec. 57 - Executive Pay Plan Increases

This section removes scheduled salary increases for employees in the Executive Pay Plan in fiscal year 2014.

Secs. 58-73 - Transfer Construction Responsibility for Board of Regents Projects (BOR) to BOR from the Department of Construction Services

These sections transfer the responsibility for the facilities design and construction of projects for the Community Technical Colleges and Connecticut State Universities to the Board of Regents. This transfer will create efficiencies by allowing the Board of Regents to manage their own projects similar to UCONN.

Secs. 74-84 - Eliminate Tourism Districts

These sections eliminate any statutory references to the regional tourism districts. Although the tourism districts would be eliminated, the Department of Economic and Community Development will work with regional agents throughout the state in order to continue to market the state's attractions. Membership of the Tourism Advisory Committee will change from including members from each regional tourism district to members with tourism industry experience from within the state.

Secs. 85-89 - Create an Arts Council

A Connecticut Arts Council is established within DECD to foster and support the arts. The council is made up of eleven members and is authorized to establish and manage a nonprofit foundation.

Secs. 90-114, 116-126 - Commission on Citizen Advocacy

These sections create the Commission on Citizen Advocacy. Membership of the board is bipartisan and includes representatives from various cultural backgrounds. The Governor has recommended for inclusion on the board a member representing the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, a group not expressly represented by the current legislative commissions. The proposed Commission on Citizen Advocacy would incorporate the existing legislative commissions (African American Affairs, Asian Pacific American Affairs, Children, Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs and Permanent Commission on Status of Women). The Commission on Aging, which was established to advocate for the elderly population after the Department on Aging was merged into the Department of Social Services in 1993, is recommended for elimination as the Department on Aging is now fully budgeted and re-established.

Sec. 115 - Technical Change/Statutory Reference to DMHAS

This section removes obsolete statutory references relating to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services serving as the successor agency to the addiction services division of the Department of Public Health and Addiction Services.

Sec. 127 - Technical and Conforming Changes/Statutory Reference to DCF

This section removes an obsolete statutory reference to the Department of Children and Youth Services, the predecessor agency to the Department of Children and Families. It also makes a technical change to conform to the elimination of the Commission on Children within section 271.

Secs. 128-130 - Affirmative Action

This proposal will centralize affirmative action planning functions by transferring the responsibility of affirmative action plan development from state agencies to the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. In addition, nine positions will transfer to CHRO from other state agencies. CHRO will continue its oversight role, and agencies will continue to oversee plan compliance and handle related personnel matters.

Secs. 131-141 - Office of Governmental Accountability

A legal and enforcement division is created under the Office of the Executive Administrator and duties related to hearings and conducting investigations are transferred from the separate divisions into that office. The intent is to have subject matter experts who concentrate on the three primary topic areas, and have remaining staff cross-train and support those experts. Additionally, the bill transfers the Council on Environmental Quality to the Office of Governmental Accountability, and eliminates the ability of the Governmental Accountability Commission to terminate the executive administrator of the Office of Governmental Accountability.

Secs. 142-268 - Transfer Statewide Human Resources to the Office of Policy and Management

The proposal transfers responsibility for statewide human resources from the Department of Administrative Services to the Office of Policy and Management. These sections also modify the exam process to make hiring more efficient while retaining protections to ensure qualified applicants are hired. The language also transfers the Employee Review Board from the Department of Administrative Services to the Department of Labor.

I would like to again thank the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony. I respectfully request that the Committee support this bill and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.