



CCM 2013 Testimony

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ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

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The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (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 92% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

SB 1082 "An Act Concerning Brownfield Redevelopment, Institutional Controls and Significant Environmental Hazard Programs."

Brownfield remediation and redevelopment continues to be a high priority for towns and cities across the state and is a critical part of Connecticut's efforts to: (1) spur development in places where the infrastructure to support it already exists; (2) improve blighted areas; (3) limit sprawl and preserve open space in outlying areas; and, (4) clean up our environment.

The key to making progress on this front is having clear guidance on state priorities and process for addressing brownfields including, but not limited to establishing, (1) solid liability protection for 'innocent' landowners; (2) an appropriate process for identifying brownfield properties; and (3) clear guidelines as to what constitutes remediation.

Among other things, this bill makes positive steps in fixing problems associated with brownfield remediation and redevelopment by creating a Municipal Liability Relief Program, providing needed liability protection for municipalities acquiring brownfield sites. This new program would provide municipalities with some certainty and build upon the municipal liability protection under the current brownfield grant and loan programs. Several years ago, the municipal grant program was implemented and has been quite successful. This proposal broadens that liability protection for municipalities.

- Municipalities need to be able to foreclose and take over properties and offer them for redevelopment free of concerns from the costs and burdens of liability; and, combine properties in order to offer a larger parcel to a developer.

However, CCM continues to be concerned that, along with several positive steps to provide liability relief and guidance to landowners - similar to the recently published draft of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protections' Comprehensive Evaluation and Transformation of Connecticut's Clean-Up Laws - this proposal would expand the universe of what properties will be captured under the remediation regulations, before fully establishing the proper foundation for addressing the contamination.

Property-owners are already afraid to identify brownfield issues due to concerns that they will get captured into the remediation process without any clear-cut way to address and close the books. The current back log of properties is huge. There are around 3,000-4,000 transfer act sites in the system at any given time. Only about one-dozen are cleared from this system each year. The impact of such an expansion could be enormous.

In addition, a cost-benefit analysis as to the impact of this larger universe of properties should be examined to ensure that the effort put into remediation is actually going to provide not only the desired results, but also results that match the expenditures.

CCM urges the Committee to proceed carefully with the final language of this bill to ensure that it is crafted in a way to achieve the needed goals of helping, not hindering, brownfield remediation and redevelopment in Connecticut.



If you have any questions, please contact Kachina Walsh-Weaver, State Relations Manager for CCM via email kwalsh-weaver@ccm-ct.org or via phone (203) 710-9525.