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First Selectman
Town of Bethany
Public Hearing Testimony
Planning & Development Committee
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the need to provide towns with mandate relief.

Unfortunately, many well-intentioned bills wind up having big price tags for towns – price tags that we simply cannot afford. For example, the state's new anti-bullying law will add 345 administrative hours or 27 days of additional work for the Bethany School District. Certainly, anti-bullying legislation is important but we need to ensure that it can be implemented in a way that is practical and effective. Requiring new mandates to be adopted by a 2/3 majority of the legislature will help ensure that these issues are carefully deliberated and questions regarding the best way to achieve the goals of the legislation without imposing costly burdens on towns can be better addressed.

Legal Notices - Publishing legal notices in newspapers cost the Town of Bethany $20,500 in FY12 and we have no idea how many residents actually get the New Haven Register. The less expensive weeklies no longer cover Bethany. Allowing towns to publish such notices on their website will ensure that people have greater access to this information and I support SB-143, HB-5530 and HB-5532 which address this issue.

Property Storage Mandate - I support HB-5295 which would eliminate the property storage mandate on towns, which can cost some towns a lot of money and does not benefit taxpayers in any way.

In addition to these issues, I urge you to address the following cost drivers:

Municipal Employee Retirement System - Because the employee contribution rate under the Municipal Employee Retirement System (MERS) is mandated by statute, the town's pension costs are increasing. In FY06, the MERS employer contribution was 6.75% and in FY13 it will be 12% - an increase of approximately $20,000 for our six-man road crew.

Prevailing Wage Mandate - Recently, the prevailing wage mandate cost the Town of Bethany an additional $54,000 for 2.9 miles of road.

Municipal Employee Premium Tax - The 3% premium tax imposed on towns – but not the state – cost Bethany an additional amount of approximately $12,000 per year.

While these may appear to be small amounts these mandates alone represent $120 in property tax for the average Bethany homeowner.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these important issues.