



Farmington River Watershed Association, Inc.

749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

(860) 658-4442 Fax (860) 651-7519 www.frwa.org

March 14, 2013

To: Chairman Meyer and members of the Environment Committee

From: Farmington River Watershed Association

Testimony on H.B. No. 6537,

AN ACT CONCERNING WATER QUALITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT.

On behalf of the Farmington River Watershed Association, I am submitting testimony in support of H.B. 6537, An Act Concerning Water Quality and the University of Connecticut, because it will require the University of Connecticut to conform to laws regulating water companies.

We understand that the primary function of the University is not to be a water company, and that legal status as a water company creates complications which were the reasons it was excused from water company status in 2000. We also recognize that in many ways the University has voluntarily acted as a water company, in that it has supplied water supply plans to the Department of Public Health, mapped aquifer areas, and in addition has instituted exemplary water conservation policies.

However, the University is a supplier of water to a large on- and off-campus population, and it is not regulated by laws that apply to other water utilities in the state. As a University, its overall planning process necessarily includes many other factors besides stewardship of water resources. Other considerations could conceivably have an undue influence on its internal water planning. If that were ever the case, lack of external oversight could lead to abuse of a public good.

Our concerns about unregulated water planning or undue influences on planning decisions are not limited to UConn. Our support for this bill is intended as a call for more consistency overall in the way water supplies, and water suppliers, are managed in the state of Connecticut. There is a long-standing need to assess our water resources, provide incentives for water conservation even for companies that sell water, bring order to plans for allocating water fairly across the state, and allocate fairly between direct human uses and the uses that support a healthy environment to live in. This bill could be a step in the right direction, though there is still a long way to go.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eileen Fielding". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eileen Fielding,
Executive Director