



**Testimony
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Before the Environment Committee
March 22, 2013**

RE: SB-1081 – An Act Concerning Recycling and Jobs

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) appreciates the efforts of the state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to develop an incentive-based proposal to encourage municipalities to move to pay-as-you throw programs and encourage greater regional collaboration for solid waste disposal.

However, we are very concerned, given the ongoing budget challenges facing the state, that this bill will wind up being another unfunded mandate on municipalities and taxpayers.

COST recognizes the importance of reaching the state's targeted goal of removing 40% of recyclables from the solid waste stream. This will reduce costs and ease pressure on precious landfill capacity. To help achieve this goal, Connecticut adopted Public 10-87 which expands the types of items that must be recycled; requires solid waste collectors and most municipalities to offer curbside or backyard recycling to those to whom they offer curbside or backyard waste removal; and requires recycling receptacles at common gathering venues.

Now, rather than build on the efforts outlined in PA 10-87, the state wants to move forward with another recycling proposal which could result in a costly new mandate on municipalities. Municipal budgets and the property taxpayers who fund them are pressed to the limit. Our towns and cities are making heroic efforts to avoid placing any additional burdens on our taxpayers as we struggle at all levels of government to address serious, ongoing budget challenges.

The state is no position to fund an incentive program or even to provide much in the way of technical assistance to municipalities, given the impact of recent state budgets on staffing and programs within DEEP.

In addition, the bill provides an option to municipalities to exempt machinery and equipment used in connection with recycling from the property tax, which COST opposes. If the state believes incentives are needed to encourage individuals and businesses to purchase recycling machinery, it should develop state funded incentives.

Therefore, although we believe the goal of the bill is laudable, COST opposes it at this time.

COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000.

COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.