



**Testimony  
Betsy Gara  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the  
Finance Committee  
March 11, 2013**

**RE: HB-6575, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN STATE GRANTS TO TOWNS.**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) supports Section 2 of HB-6575 which provides a higher rate of reimbursement to municipalities for phosphorous removal projects.

Several towns in Connecticut are facing multi-million dollar wastewater treatment plant upgrades in order to comply with DEEP's "interim" phosphorus discharge limits, which DEEP and U.S. EPA acknowledge are subject to revision in a few years. Because the proposed limits will be set forth in each plant's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, there is little opportunity to discuss and develop a statewide approach to phosphorus reduction to improve water quality. This permit-by-permit approach imposes a significant burden on certain communities whose permits are up for renewal and creates considerable uncertainty as to how costly plant upgrades will help achieve compliance with statewide phosphorus reduction goals.

By providing a higher rate of reimbursement to the affected municipalities, HB-6575 will help ensure that certain towns are not shouldering the burden for implementing plant upgrades to meet statewide environmental goals.

Last session, the legislature adopted Public Act 12-155 which included provisions requiring DEEP to work with the affected municipalities to evaluate and make recommendations regarding a statewide phosphorus removal strategy that would eliminate some of the pressure on wastewater treatment plants to achieve statewide reduction goals. However, although DEEP held two informational sessions on this issue, the group has not begun to meet and is not expected to until April. Given that the permits are in the process of being issued, we believe that the grant percentages need to be addressed this session.

*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. More information is available at [www.ctcost.org](http://www.ctcost.org).*