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**HB5424: An Act Concerning the Responsibilities of the Water Planning Council**

It's often stated that Connecticut is a "water rich" state. Although we're certainly better off than many western states, such a description is at best misleading because it fails to recognize that Connecticut faces a number of challenges with regard to water availability, accessibility and quality. Water is also a factor in our debate about shoreline resilience and flooding problems both on the coast and along many rivers.

Rather than wait for a water-related calamity to occur, the citizens of Connecticut are best served by a proactive and comprehensive initiative to define and address the challenges ahead. HB5424 represents an essential step forward by enabling the Water Planning Council to better fulfill its established mandate as well as pursue a state water plan.

This bill also helps to redefine the scope of work such a plan would encompass. Thanks to the excellent dialogue engendered by the recent Water Summit initiated by Representative Hampton and the subsequent conference sponsored by UConn, experts and legislators have already achieved a preliminary consensus on the breadth of issues which face our state. It is the variety and complexity of these inter-related issues which make a comprehensive plan so important.

Along with giving the Council the authority it requires to meet its mandate and pursue a comprehensive water plan, this bill also authorizes modest but critical funding so that the Council also has the necessary resources to complete the plan on the timetable stipulated in the bill. We should consider this funding as a wise investment to assure that the state develops an long-term action plan which will protect public health and the environment as well as enhance the reliability and accessibility of water resources to the benefit of the economy and recreation.

The creation of a comprehensive water plan for Connecticut is long overdue. Let's do the right thing now so that we can assure the future of our most precious natural resource. Thank you.