



## **Bristol Resource Recovery Facility Operating Committee**

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**Testimony of the**  
**Bristol Resource Recovery Facility Operating Committee**  
**and the Tunxis Recycling Operating Committee**  
**to the Environment Committee**  
**March 7, 2014**

**Proposed S.B. 27**

**AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S RECYCLING AND MATERIALS**  
**MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban, and members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present comments on Governor Malloy's proposed bill S.B. 27, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Recycling and Materials Management Strategy.

I am the Executive Director of the Bristol Resource Recovery Facility Operating Committee (BRRFOC), a regional waste management agency serving eighteen municipalities with a population of over 375,000. Our agency, founded in 1985, has grown from a core group of eight cities and towns to its present configuration based on successful management and oversight by chief elected officials, town managers, and public works directors. Those individuals in our organization who serve on the Board or Subcommittees provide key leadership and guidance on all matters related to operation of the agency, including budgets, strategic planning, and contract administration

To begin with, we are pleased to see the legislation firmly address the issue of what the future holds for Connecticut's solid waste management practices. It is clear the Governor's office and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection have given careful consideration to moving forward by inviting innovation and emerging technologies to solve the complex problems associated with proper management of waste. Careful attention is given in the proposed legislation to creating new opportunities for recovery of materials and energy.

We also want to emphasize the important role of regional waste management agencies, which, like BRRFOC, engage local municipal officials in the planning and administration of programs for waste disposal, recycling, outreach and education, and related efforts. Our success, like many of our companion agencies, derives from a close connection between decision makers and "boots on the ground" personnel responsible for collection, maintenance, and handling of the various types of materials generally referred to as "waste." Our municipalities have active and successful programs for recovery of all of the mandatory items specified in C.G.S. 22a-220, as well as programs for textiles and apparel, appliances, paint, household hazardous waste, and other materials.

Our region has shown remarkable success with increased recycling through adoption of single stream automated collection. We concluded negotiations on a new, 20-year agreement to continue services at very competitive rates following expiration of our current Service Agreement on June 30, 2014.

We are at a crossroads as we prepare for the transition from our current Service Agreement with Covanta Bristol, Inc. to a new relationship in which each municipality is a party to an Agreement (i.e., fourteen individual contracts). At the same time, the member communities will be divided among three different Councils of Government: CRCOG, the Naugatuck Valley Council, and the Litchfield/Northwest Council. We observe nothing detrimental in the proposed bill which could impose obstacles for these fourteen cities and towns to continue a long-standing relationship of collaboration and participation; however, this may be more of a challenge for existing regional waste authorities who are not close to end-of-term, and require ongoing collaboration to successfully fulfill their respective missions. It is important to have a better understanding of how the Governor and Legislators envision the role of regional waste agencies, how boundaries will be drawn, and what level of support will be provided by OPM and DEEP.

Legislators are well aware of budget constraints faced by municipalities as funding for key programs has been reduced or eliminated, and yet the demand for services remains constant. Each of Connecticut's 169 municipalities is challenged with doing more with less, and this expectation is especially noted with respect to managing waste. The opportunity to obtain grant funds is of tremendous importance given these challenges.

Thus we come to the question of how DEEP and the Recycling CT Foundation Council can further assist our cities and towns in moving forward to implement new methods of handling waste and recovering value. As proposed, the legislation would create a purchasing pool for electricity, for state and municipal operation under the auspices of DEEP. We are very interested in understanding how this will benefit residents, and whether such an arrangement would compare favorably with existing programs in place with major utilities and CEFIA.

We are also interested providing input as to how the proposed Recycling CT Foundation Council (Sec. 4 of S.B. 27) can assist the member cities and towns in offering new services to residents and businesses. Given the experience of our staff and Board members who have served on the Governor's Modernizing Recycling Working Group and the Resources Recovery Task Force, we request consideration for an appointment to the Council upon passage of this legislation.

It is important to note that DEEP, along with our member communities, is experiencing difficulties in maintaining programs required through partnerships with USEPA as well as current statutory obligations. It is well known that the dedicated staff at DEEP include a sizable number of individuals who will be eligible for retirement in the near future, and the turnover ratio is expected to be significant. The institutional knowledge and experience of those individuals who may soon leave the agency likely will leave a significant gap, and it is important to recognize the impact of new programs and responsibilities on a state agency which is already carrying a heavy load with a diminishing work force.

With the understanding that DEEP is already facing hurdles managing its current statutory responsibilities, we encourage the Governor's staff and Legislators to consider that local input is vital to the success of new initiatives. Municipal officials have a level of understanding of local issues unmatched by state agencies, and can effectively collaborate through regional partnerships in developing innovative solutions to complex problems. These individuals have a thorough understanding of existing contractual commitments, local priorities, and funding constraints which apply to productive execution of new initiatives.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss these comments with members of the Committee, and thank you for your consideration.