



**Testimony  
Betsy Gara  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the Finance Committee  
March 13, 2014**

**RE: SB-29, AN ACT AUTHORIZING AND ADJUSTING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER PURPOSES**

**The Connecticut Council of Small Towns *supports* the following provisions in the Governor's Bond Package:**

**COST supports additional funding for the state's Local Bridge Program.**

Towns and cities in Connecticut are responsible for maintaining more than 3,400 bridges and culverts. Recognizing the huge costs associated with constructing and maintaining bridges, the legislature created the Local Bridge program in 1984. Although funding was eliminated in 2009, Governor Malloy and state lawmakers restored funding to the program last year.

This program is critical to assisting municipalities in upgrading municipal bridges that are in disrepair or otherwise structurally deficient. According to an analysis prepared by the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), over a third of Connecticut municipal bridges are considered either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. COST therefore applauds the Governor's recommendation to restore an additional \$10 million in funding to this program.

COST urges support for Section 17(c) of the bill, which authorizes an additional \$10 million in funding for the state's Local Bridge program.

**COST supports additional funding for the School Security Infrastructure Grant Program.**

Prior to restoring funding for this grant program, many school districts were using a "cut and paste" approach to funding school security measures, funding one project one year but cutting back the next year to address other educational priorities.

Clearly, school security is a priority in our communities. We therefore urge continued support for funding for the School Security Infrastructure Grant program, which provides grants to school districts to improve security infrastructure in schools, install security systems in primary entryways, purchase portable security devices, and train school personnel to use the devices and the infrastructure.



## **COST Supports Efforts to Assist Towns in Meeting Statewide Phosphorus Reduction Goals**

COST continues to support efforts to assist towns in fulfilling their obligation to make needed improvements to sewers and other clean water projects.

Many municipalities are faced with staggering costs associated with state-mandated and federally-mandated (1) water pollution control projects (including waste water treatment (sewer) projects, nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) removal and resource restoration projects to protect the Long Island Sound) and (2) drinking water projects.

Several towns in Connecticut are facing multi-million dollar wastewater treatment plant upgrades in order to comply with state and federal phosphorus reduction goals *intended to benefit the state as a whole*. This imposes a significant burden on certain communities whose plants discharge into non-tidal surface waters.

Recognizing this concern, the General Assembly adopted Public Act 13-239 which increases from 30% to 50% the amount certain towns are eligible to receive for phosphorus reduction projects under the Clean Water Fund grant program. However, the increased reimbursements are available only to the first three construction contracts entered into by municipalities before July 1, 2018. This creates an uneven playing field that benefits some towns to the detriment of others.

In view of these costs, we urge lawmakers to maintain funding for the Clean Water Fund and to support legislation referred to this committee (HB-5081) to provide a greater reimbursement percentage to municipalities for phosphorus removal projects.

This will help ensure that certain towns are not shouldering the entire financial burden for meeting statewide environmental goals.

*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.*