OFFICE OF THE
TOWN MANAGER

March 17, 2014

Written Testimony:
HB No. 5580 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PESTICIDE ADVISORY COUNCIL, THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT EMERGECNY MEDICAL SERVICES PRIMARY SERVICE AREA TASK FORCE AND ELIMINATION OF A MUNICIPAL MANDATE

Submitted by:
Ronald F. Van Winkle
Town Manager
Town of West Hartford
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West Hartford, Connecticut 06017

While I am unable to attend the hearing, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to submit this written testimony. You are considering Raised Bill No. 5580, An Act Concerning the Pesticide Advisory Council, the Recommendations of the Connecticut Emergency Medical Services Primary Service Area Task Force and the Elimination of a Municipal Mandate. The Town of West Hartford supports the provisions of this bill regarding the municipality's ability to select an ambulance service for their PSA. In particular we request that the Planning and Development Committee adopt recommendation #5 of the Task Force that permits a municipality to select the qualified ambulance service for its community.

Under present law the municipality is assigned a single provider through the assignment of the Primary Service Area (PSA) by the Department of Health. The PSA is assigned to a single company in perpetuity. Should the Municipality want to provide this primary ambulance service to its citizens through a municipal service, Public Safety model, we are not permitted. Should the Municipality choose to select an alternate service provider, we are not permitted, short of the Commissioner of Health revoking the company's certification for poor performance. This is purely a public safety service to our residents like our Fire Department or Police Department.

A more flexible system would allow the Municipality to develop a service that works best for them. Having an outside monopolistic company choose the service they will provide is not in the best interest of the citizens. A competitive system would allow the municipality to get the best service tailored to its particular needs.

As you may know, during storm Nemo some ambulance services did not provide this critical medical service during the storm. In the Town of West Hartford we were informed by the PSA holder that they were pulling the ambulances from the town. We had prepared for this emergency and the ambulances were stationed in the fire stations and a snow plow was assigned to the ambulance in order to insure that our residents would be serviced. Without the intervention of our Fire Chief, we would not have had an ambulance service in the community during the storm. This would not have been necessary with a municipal service or a municipally bid and negotiated contract.

The passage of HB No. 5580 and the inclusion of recommendation #5 of the Task Force will allow our community to insure that we have the best possible public safety services, will help to reduce the cost of healthcare and will allow the town to utilize our resources in the best possible manner.

Sincerely,

Ronald F. Van Winkle
Town Manager