



TOWN OF VERNON

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TO: Public Health Committee
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FM: Diane Wheelock, Chairman
North Central Health District
Board of Directors
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RE: HB 5504 – “An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health’s
Recommendations Regarding Local Health Departments and Districts

“ Change _ For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2014, and June 30, 2015, any moneys remaining unexpended at the end of a fiscal year shall be included in the budget of the district for the ensuing year. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, and each fiscal year thereafter, any such moneys shall revert to the General Fund of the state. This aid shall be rendered from appropriations made from time to time by the General Assembly to the Department of Public Health for this purpose. ”

TESTIMONY

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony relative to the above legislation. As stated above I am the Chairman of the North Central Health District Board of Directors. The NCHD is an eight town **regional health district**. We receive funding, as other Health Departments do, from the per capita State of Connecticut allotment. In addition, The Towns of Vernon, Ellington, East Windsor, Windham, Willimantic, Stafford, Suffield and Enfield each contribute per capita funding to the NCHD each year. When possible, the district works hard to obtain available grant funding. I am sending this testimony on behalf of all eight towns in our district. We are extremely concerned about this proposed legislation for the following reasons:

We in the NCHD are unique, as are *all regional health districts*. We are required to maintain our own office space or buildings, perform building maintenance, have and maintain parking areas for our visitors, provide wages, workers compensation, health insurance and pensions for our employees, contract with many vendors for services: building cleaning, information technology, human resources, training, accounting, legal services, heating, cooling, utilities, phone systems, rolling stock, building repairs, office supplies, furniture **AND PROVIDE ALL HEALTH SERVICES**.

If we were a department within an individual town we would only be responsible for our staff and providing health services. The Town would provide the buildings, insurance, wages, utilities, rolling stock, furniture and office supplies, and contract with all the vendors.

Every dollar the NCHD receives is used to either support the services we provide, maintain our presence in the towns we serve or helps to provide for future capital expenses such as replacing our vehicles; replacing the furnace, uncompensated absences for employees who retire, funds the pension plan and keeps us in a position to adhere to all the rules and regulations required by state and federal law.

This bill would significantly impact our regional efforts, we would spend additional dollars on accounting expenses keeping separate books. We would not be able properly fund our Capital Plan because dollars could not be used from one fiscal year to the next.

This District works very hard to make sure our inspection percentages are high and we strive to increase those percentages each year. We cross-train our employees, to make the absolute best use of the staff hours we have. In the coming year we are embarking on a new initiative at the NCHD to move forward with our accreditation. Here at the NCHD we use short and long term planning strategies and without funding we can count on these initiatives will never move forward.

To support our everyday work environment we are using our capital dollars to : Upgrade our phone system to allow our sanitarians to stay in the field and calls are forwarded from the office directly to their cell phones; we are presently working on having our field inspectors access all information, forms and business data from their IPADS (we are presently beta testing this process now with already established software); we are working with Iron Mountain to maintain our records storage both digitally and hard copy and we need our capital fund to continue these advances. These aren't the type of projects you do with operating dollars alone.

Please, please , please have a meeting with Health Directors and their Board of Directors before you move this bill forward. It is my hope that together we can bring you up to date on what is happening in the field and work with you to prove that state dollars are being used wisely.

We here at the NCHD are working to become the very best district in the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns and we look forward to working with you.