



**Elizabeth Gara, Executive Director
Connecticut Water Works Association
Energy & Public Utilities Committee
February 24, 2015**

The Connecticut Water Works Association (CWVA) appreciates the opportunity to comment regarding **HB-6018, AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY SERVICE RESTORATION**, which would require public service companies to prioritize service restoration for customers with disabilities. Private water companies are included under the statutory definition of public service company and, as such, would be affected by this bill.

As public water suppliers, our members have an obligation to provide sufficient quantities of high quality water to meet the needs of consumers in the communities that they serve. We vigorously protect the quality, safety and reliability of our water supplies to meet this obligation. Recognizing how vital public water supplies are to public health and safety, water utilities have long been required under state and federal law to develop and implement emergency planning to respond quickly to contamination, damage or disruption to the water system.

In addition, under existing law, each water company serving 1,000 or more persons or 250 or more customers is required to develop and submit a water supply emergency contingency plan as part of its water supply plan to the state Department of Public Health (DPH) for its review and approval. The plan must include the level of service to be sustained during water supply emergencies and procedures for providing essential potable water to priority users where priority is based on the potential risk to health, safety and welfare posed by the curtailment of service. Also, public water suppliers are required to provide DPH with a list of facilities that are to be prioritized for power restoration during storm events, including health care facilities and other facilities that serve vulnerable populations.

Fortunately, during severe storms in 2011 and 2012 that resulted in widespread power outages, there were only isolated incidents where customers of public water suppliers experienced disruptions in service. Moreover, given the number of different water companies, the use of backup generators during storms, mutual aid agreements, interconnections and other operational flexibility, water outages typically last only a matter of hours, not days, and are constrained only by the time it takes to make a repair and confirm water quality results. A significant percentage of the population, however, relies on private well water and service is disrupted during power outages. Interruptions in water service do not give rise to life threatening circumstances, however, or compromise the health of individuals who need electricity for certain medical needs or devices.

Since the severe storms a few years ago, communities have been working with state agencies and other partners to assist in developing protocols for responding to the needs of vulnerable populations during emergencies, including developing a plan for assisting individuals with disabilities and older adults with complex healthcare, physical and cognitive needs and working with nonprofit organizations and community providers to develop "pre-identified priority lists" to coordinate appropriate care.

Given the current provisions in the law and the efforts of state agencies to work with communities to develop appropriate response measures, we don't believe it is necessary to include water utilities within the scope of this bill.

The Connecticut Water Works Association, Inc. (CWVA) is an association of private, municipal and regional public water supply utilities serving a population of about 2½ million people, located throughout Connecticut.