



CCM 2015 Testimony

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FINANCE, REVENUE & BONDING COMMITTEE

March 9, 2015

Good afternoon, my name is Michael Criss, First Selectman of Harwinton and member of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM). CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 156 towns and cities, representing over 95 percent of Connecticut's population.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today regarding the Governor's proposed revenue bill:

SB 946, "An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor's Budget"

CCM is very appreciative that Governor Malloy has maintained a commitment to property taxpayers by sparing major municipal state grants from cuts. As a former mayor, the Governor understands that by saying "no" to municipal cuts, he is saying "yes" to property taxpayers.

Resident State Trooper Program

The Resident State Trooper Program is one of the primary examples of how collaboration and service sharing can be beneficial to the State and its municipalities. Without this program the State would be responsible for providing law enforcement services at their full cost albeit from resources available at the Troop, or the community would be required to start their own department at a cost, which would well exceed available resources.

The proposed change in SB 946 that would require participating towns pay 70% to 100% would impose a significant financial burden on small town budgets and the local taxpayers they serve. CCM conducted a survey of towns participating in the Resident State Trooper Program. The results revealed that if 100% is required, a \$40,000 to \$300,000 increase in municipal budgets would likely occur. For many small towns, this increase would be unsustainable. Local officials would have to decide whether to continue to participate in the program, or rely on troopers from the barracks to provide necessary public safety. If this occurs, it is unlikely that the State will benefit from the anticipated \$4 million savings this proposal forecasts, as troopers will still be required to patrol and respond to incidents in the community.

The current 70/30 split between participating municipalities and State is an equitable distribution. The current percentage allows municipalities the benefit of a State Trooper, as well as it allows the barracks the ability to strategically utilize that trooper when needed. Resident State Troopers are state employees, and the State maintains administrative oversight in the coordination of their response to other emergencies. As several local CEOs have reported, their Resident State Trooper is often called out of town – almost 5-8 times per week – leaving local CEOs

with little to no managerial influence on the assignments of Resident State Troopers, beyond their contractual agreements.

CCM understands the need for law enforcement to respond to other events, however local property taxpayers should not be responsible for covering such “state-related” costs. Therefore, CCM recommends at the very least, that the Committee consider requiring the State to reimburse municipalities, or provide credits for the time Resident State Troopers spend outside of their communities.

In the end, Resident State Troopers protect vital safety needs for the approximately 62 towns statewide associated with this program. Requiring these towns to pay in excess of hundreds of thousands of dollars per year to sustain the program, and therefore requiring them to explore other options for police services is not good statewide public policy.

CCM urges the Committee to oppose the recommendation to mandate small towns, and their property taxpayers, that participate in the Resident State Trooper Program cover 100% of the costs of a trooper – and instead, maintain the current local/state payment structure which more accurately aligns with the actual local/state operations of our this highly-valued program.

CCM respectfully urges the committee to amend SB 946 to (a) maintain the current local-state funding structure of the Resident State Trooper Program; and (b) restore critical revenue to towns and cities – for the benefit of residential and business property taxpayers.

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If you have any questions, please contact Robert Labanara, State Relations Manager for CCM, at rlabanara@ccm-ct.org.