

Testimony by Michael A. Milone
Town Manager, Cheshire
Judiciary Committee
Friday, March 6, 2015
State Legislative Office Building

Re: Raised Bill No. 980 -- An Act Concerning Prison Gerrymandering.

Honorable Committee Members, good morning and thank you for allowing me to address you. My name is Michael A. Milone, I am the Town Manager in the Town of Cheshire, and I am writing to express my opposition to Raised Bill No. 980, An Act Concerning Prison Gerrymandering.

This legislation would have a significant negative impact on Cheshire's State aid and our operating budget. We estimate that if Raised Bill No. 980 were enacted it would result in a 30% reduction in our Education Cost Sharing Grant (ECS), a loss of approximately \$1.952 million which is equivalent to .73 mills.

Cheshire is home to the second largest prison in the State and as such the PILOT payment for State property that we receive is approximately 52.93% of the Statutory requirement, an underfunding of approximately \$1.890 million.

In addition, the Department of Correction's (DOC) is unwilling to renegotiate our prison agreement to assist in the cost of our \$32.150 million Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade (approximately \$5.0 million), and has refused to pay a user charge back-billing of \$2.1 million incurred because of malfunctioning State meters. Being a host community for a prison is not an asset or a benefit, as the potential loss of \$1.952 million in our ECS grant program further illustrates.

Cheshire officials have worked very hard to be fiscally responsible. We are maintaining a strong fund balance, we have established significant reserve accounts, our debt service obligations are declining, and we have preserved two very high credit ratings. Yet, like other municipalities, even with cuts in services, programs and personnel, we have still been forced to consistently increase the taxes on our businesses and residents.

Because Cheshire has the dubious distinction of being a Prison Town, this Raised Bill No. 980, as previously stated, would reduce our ECS grant by approximately \$1.952 million. This coupled with the PILOT underfunding of \$1.890 million and the Department of Corrections unwillingness to pay the \$7.1 million, creates an overwhelming financial burden because we are a host community for a prison.

If this Bill to count incarcerated prisoners at their residence prior to incarceration gets approved, the ECS revenue loss would do irreparable damage to our school system and create significant financial pressures for our community, especially when combined with all the previously mentioned reductions.

Consequently, I urge you to defeat Raised Bill No. 980. Thank you for allowing me to voice my opposition, and I wish you well in your deliberations during this legislative session.