

Michael R. Criss  
First Selectman  
Town of Harwinton  
Before the Planning & Development Committee  
February 4, 2015

**Re: HB-5096, AN ACT INCREASING THE THRESHOLD REQUIRED FOR PASSAGE OF UNFUNDED MANDATES.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB-5096, which requires a two-thirds majority of both chambers in order to adopt any new or expanded unfunded mandates.

As First Selectman of Harwinton, I have been working to improve the efficiency of our local government and be more responsive to our residents and businesses. Like many towns, we are struggling to find ways to reduce municipal costs to address concerns with declining revenues and flat funding of state aid to municipalities.

Unfortunately, efforts to reduce costs are often undermined by state mandates that tie our hands in trying to control wage, health care, pension and education costs. We need more flexibility in addressing these issues, particularly given the ongoing budgetary issues facing the town and the state.

I therefore support HB-5096 before the committee today that will require any new mandate to be approved by a 2/3 majority of the legislature. This will provide greater opportunity for meaningful dialogue about the cost and benefits of any proposed state mandate.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We appreciate that this committee is looking for ways to address the need to relief towns of unfunded mandates.

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