



CCM 2015 Testimony

600 CHAPEL STREET, 9th FLOOR, NEW HAVEN, CT 06510-2807 PHONE (203) 498-3000 FAX (203) 592-9314

Your source for local government management information www.ccm-ct.org

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

February 13, 2015

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (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 and over 96% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

HB 5886, "An Act Prohibiting Municipal Employees from Serving on Certain Municipal Legislative Bodies"

It is not uncommon in communities to have public employees serve on local legislative bodies. State statute, which supersedes the charter prohibition, allows public employees to serve on local legislative bodies. They are allowed to vote on any issue as long as they personally do not benefit to a greater degree than the employment class they are a part of. Most communities also have an Ethics Code and an Ethics Commission that enforces the code.

The argument that the bill is needed because certain communities do not have a Board of Finance is not persuasive, since local boards of finance do not get into municipal labor relations except in an advisory role -- negotiations and arbitration are the sole purview of the chief executive. Legislative bodies act on the negotiated contract or arbitration award, but play no other role.

There are a number of communities that are consolidated towns/cities without boards of finance, including Bridgeport, Danbury, Hartford, Derby, and New Britain.

As this Committee knows better than others at the Legislature, serving on a city council or board of selectmen requires dedication and sacrifice. The extremely long hours, lack of privacy and little or no pay for these "part time" positions make public service a challenging endeavor for many residents. HB 5886 further complicates this situation by shrinking the pool of eligible residents to serve on a local legislative body.

The voters make a determination about the fitness of persons to serve on their City Council: it happens biennially on local Election Day. If residents find councilmembers and their source of employment problematic, they'll express their displeasure at the ballot box.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

If you have any questions, please contact Randy Collins (rcollins@ccm-ct.org) or Ron Thomas (rthomas@ccm-ct.org) of CCM, at (203) 498-3000.