



**Testimony  
Betsy Gara  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the Public Safety Committee  
March 3, 2015**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in **support** of **SB-1014, AN ACT CONCERNING THE OVERTIME COSTS OF RESIDENT STATE TROOPERS**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST), which represents 115 towns throughout Connecticut, supports efforts to control costs associated with the Resident State Trooper program to ensure that it continues to be a viable program that enhances public safety in many of our smaller communities.

For more than 60 years, the Resident State Trooper program has been a strong state-local partnership, critical to protecting public safety in 56 small towns throughout Connecticut. Unfortunately, since 2011, costs for the program have increased significantly.

In 2011, the amount towns are required to reimburse the state for overtime costs, including fringe benefits, increased from 70% to 100%. The fringe benefit rate itself has gone through the roof, adding significantly to the costs of the program.

Unfortunately, under Governor Malloy's proposed budget, small towns would be required to shoulder 100% of the costs of the Resident State Trooper program, forcing towns to consider cutting back on troopers or other programs or increasing property taxes. Although we appreciate Governor Malloy's efforts to keep towns whole in what is an extremely difficult budget year, cuts to the Resident State Trooper program will have a disproportionate impact on small towns. For example, the following towns would face reductions in funding:

- Tolland - \$270,000
- Mansfield - \$500,000
- Barkhamsted - \$55,000
- East Granby - \$99,000
- Lebanon - \$39,856
- Sherman - \$50,000



This places a considerable burden on Connecticut's small towns at a time when state aid to municipalities continues to be flat-funded and the cost of providing critical services continues to escalate.

The Resident State Trooper program is a valuable partnership with the state that helps smaller towns create and maintain safe communities. Not only does the program assist small towns in maintaining a public safety presence, resident state troopers are routinely dispatched from their towns to respond to state police matters outside of their community. The program has, in fact, been a win-win for both the towns and the state.

As the state considers ways of encouraging towns to achieve savings through regional efficiencies, it should not undermine the effectiveness of what has been an example of a successful regional partnership.

Moreover, requiring towns to absorb 100% of the costs of the program may actually *increase* state costs because if a town does not have a police force or resident state trooper, it relies on the state barracks to respond to public safety concerns. The salaries and benefits of the troopers in the barracks are funded entirely by the state.

COST is also concerned that the proposal to increase municipal costs associated with the program has left towns scrambling to figure out what to do as they deliberate their local budgets. Some towns are considering cutting back on troopers as well as constables or are exploring options to share troopers with other towns. Others may consider forming a regional police station. However, given the time constraints of the local budget process, towns don't have the opportunity to fully explore or budget for these options.

COST therefore supports SB-1014 and appreciates the efforts of the committee to address costs with the program. Given the proposal to shift more of the costs of the program to municipalities, however, we urge you to help us preserve the existing 70% cost share to maintain the Resident State Trooper program.

*COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns. More information is available at [www.ctcost.org](http://www.ctcost.org).*