



CCM 2015 Testimony

900 CHAPEL STREET, 9th FLOOR, NEW HAVEN, CT 06510-2807 PHONE (203) 498-3000 FAX (203) 562-6314

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

PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE

March 3, 2015

Good Morning,

My name is Michael Criss, First Selectman for the Town of Harwinton. I am testifying on behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities representing 95% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to all towns and cities, in particular:

SB 1014 – An Act Concerning the Overtime Costs of Resident State Trooper Officers

CCM and the Town of Harwinton support SB 1014 as it would reduce the amount that towns pay for the portion of fringe benefits directly associated with Resident State Trooper overtime costs from 100% to 70%.

The Town of Harwinton is served by two Resident State Troopers who provide valuable law enforcement services for the community. This program is one of the primary examples of how collaboration and service sharing can be beneficial to the State and 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 exceed available resources. However, the continually increasing cost of the program is becoming a significant financial burden on our local budget and taxpayers. Specifically, the fringe benefit rate for the Resident State Trooper program continues to increase at an unsustainable rate.

In the past five years, the fringe benefit rate has increased at an unmanageable rate. In FY13, the fringe benefit rate was increased to 83.8% percent -- and now for FY15, the fringe benefit is over 90%. A substantial portion of the increase in fringe benefits is associated with the State charging the Town for the large unfunded liability of the State Troopers Pension Plan. Towns should not be responsible for subsidizing the State's failure over time to properly fund their pension liability. Fringe benefit costs which will shortly exceed salary costs are unsustainable.

In addition, on an annual basis local CEOs are not informed of actual rate increases until after July 1st of each year or beyond, almost five months after towns and cities adopted their operating budgets. Each town is required to enter into a two year contract with the State Police for this service except that the contract is silent on cost other than that the towns are responsible to pay promptly what is billed. We have been told on more than one occasion that actual costs cannot be determined until the end of a fiscal year, however there should be a way for the State to make a professional estimate of expenses based on actuarial assumptions similar to what we are required to do with our insurance and pension liabilities and then true up the following year if assumptions are under estimated.

In addition, **CCM urges the General Assembly to oppose the Governors recommendation to require participating towns in the Resident State Trooper Program to pay 100% of the costs.** 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. HB 5106, which is before the Public Safety Committee, would among other things, provide for such a mechanism for reimbursement or credit. Such a proposal could curb the growing costs of the Resident State Trooper Program.

CCM and the Town of Harwinton urge the Committee and General Assembly to ***favorably report both SB 1014*** and oppose all efforts that would require towns to pay 100% of the Programs cost.

Thank you.



If you have any questions, please contact Michael Criss, First Selectman Town of Harwinton (860-485-9051; mcriss@harwinton.us) or Mike Muszynski, Senior Legislative Associate of CCM at mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org or (203) 500-7556.