

Testimony re House Bill No. 6824, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017, and Making Appropriations Therefor and Other Provisions Related to Revenue

**Appropriations Committee – Public Hearing
February 25, 2015**

**Matthew W. Hart
Town Manager, Town of Mansfield**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding House Bill No. 6824, specifically regarding elements of the bill that relate to the resident state trooper program. Under the bill, the reimbursement rate that participating towns would pay for the cost of the program would increase from 70% to 100% of applicable costs. This would have a significant impact on the Town of Mansfield and would increase our costs by approximately \$500,000.

The resident trooper program certainly provides a valuable service for many of Connecticut's smaller communities. With one sergeant and nine troopers, Mansfield may have the largest contingent of resident troopers in the state. We are very fortunate to have several dedicated and talented troopers working here in Mansfield and within Troop C and the Eastern District.

Like my colleagues around the state, I am concerned about this proposal and its impact on the town's operating budget. A figure of \$500,000 represents half a mill in Mansfield, and would not be easy to absorb. Therefore, the town could very well be in the position of having to reduce the number of troopers assigned to Mansfield or to go out to bid for police services. This would run counter to a police services study we completed in 2012, which recommended that the town increase its contingent of troopers from 10 to 13, recognizing the resident trooper program as the most cost effective and efficient alternative we reviewed at that time. If this provision passes, the resident trooper program would lose much of its competitiveness, especially for municipalities that have other potential service alternatives.

The resident trooper program is one of the few successful service sharing arrangements we have in Connecticut, and allows both the state and its participating municipalities to benefit from an economy of scale. The present 70% reimbursement rate is fair because resident troopers respond to calls elsewhere with their troop's jurisdiction, providing real benefits to neighboring towns that may not have the financial capacity to hire their own troopers. If participating municipalities reduce the number of troopers assigned to their towns, the state will lose revenue, response times will increase and service will decline overall.

Consequently, I encourage the committee to take a hard look at this issue in an effort to determine if other efficiencies may be realized to achieve the bill's projected savings or if other revenue sources are available.

I appreciate your consideration of this issue and am happy to take any questions you might have.

CC: State Senator Mae Flexer
State Representative Gregory Haddad
State Representative Linda Orange
Mansfield Town Council
Commissioner Dora Schriro, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection
Major Michael Darcy, Eastern District Commander, CT State Police
Lieutenant Scott Smith, Troop C Commander, CT State Police
Sergeant Richard Cournoyer, Mansfield Resident Trooper Supervisor
Michael Muszynski, CCM
Elizabeth Gara, COST