



**Testimony  
Betsy Gara  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
February 25, 2015**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding **HB-6824, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE**, as it relates to the state Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP).

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST), which represents 115 towns throughout Connecticut, appreciates Governor Malloy's efforts to keep towns whole in what is an extremely difficult budget year. Preserving state aid to municipalities recognizes that town budgets are already stretched thin and every dollar of state aid that is cut will force an increase in local property taxes or a reduction in critical services or personnel.

However, by requiring small towns to pick up more of the costs of the Resident State Trooper program, 55 small towns throughout Connecticut will lose a significant amount of funding under the proposed budget.

For more than 60 years, the Resident State Trooper program has been a strong state-local partnership, critical to protecting public safety in our smaller communities. 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. This places a considerable burden on Connecticut's small towns at a time when state aid to municipalities continues to be flat 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 is ironic that it is undermining the effectiveness of this successful regional partnership.

Moreover, this proposal 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 therefore very concerned that the proposed budget cuts funding for this program without providing towns with an opportunity or the time to explore other options to maintain public safety services in their community.

*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).*