



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the
Environment Committee
February 13, 2015**

RE: SUPPORT - HB-5291, AN ACT CONCERNING REIMBURSEMENT FOR PHOSPHORUS ABATEMENT PROJECTS

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) supports **HB-5291, which assists municipalities in meeting state and federal phosphorus reduction goals.**

Municipalities have embraced efforts to protect the state's environment and natural resources. Many laws and regulations, however, impose difficult and costly compliance burdens on municipalities.

With respect to phosphorus removal, several towns in Connecticut are facing multi-million dollar wastewater treatment plant upgrades in order to comply with state and federal phosphorus reduction goals intended to benefit the state as a whole. This imposes a significant burden on certain communities whose plants discharge into non-tidal surface waters.

Recognizing this concern, the General Assembly adopted Public Act 13-239 and Public Act 14-13 to increase from 30% to 50% the amount certain towns are eligible to receive for phosphorus reduction projects under the Clean Water Fund grant program. However, the July 1, 2018 construction contract date and the effluent discharge limit set forth in statute makes it difficult for towns to receive the additional funding for issues that are beyond their control. As a result, towns required to meet strict phosphorus standards are faced with an uneven funding structure that benefits some towns to the detriment of others.

By providing a 50% reimbursement rate for phosphorus reduction projects, HB-5291 will help ensure that certain towns are not shouldering the financial burden of meeting statewide environmental goals.

In addition, the other provisions in the bill ensure that Connecticut's phosphorus reduction strategy will benefit from the work of the Coordinating Council, a collaborative stakeholder process created pursuant to Public Act 12-155. This process has resulted in thoughtful recommendations to enhance Connecticut's efforts to improve water quality by reducing phosphorus discharges.

The bill also calls for a study of the Quinnipiac River watershed to determine how well treatment technologies are working to meet the state and federal standards. These findings would be extremely insightful in shaping and informing Connecticut's statewide phosphorus reduction strategy.

We urge your **support** for **HB-5291**.

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.