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Testimony by:
Rep. Mary Fritz – 90th District

SB 980: An Act Concerning Prison Gerrymandering

March 6, 2015

Chairman Coleman, Chairman Tong, my honorable colleagues of the Judiciary Committee,

For the record, I am State Representative Mary Fritz of the 90th district representing parts of Wallingford and Cheshire.

I am submitting testimony today in strong opposition to SB 980, “An Act Concerning Prison Gerrymandering.”

We have had this bill before us several times but now it is in the framework of different language. However, in terms of prison towns this bill is still a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Let me address the town of Cheshire specifically. The prison land is 300 acres on Rt. 10 – right next to downtown. In 1987, I was successful in initiating a PILOT for prisons of 100%. This was the time of great prison expansion. Cheshire was the recipient of two new prisons, Maloney and Webster. (For the record, the PILOT for prisons is now at 47%, yet the land is still 300 acres.)

This proposal does not affect only Cheshire, it affects all prison communities. It takes the counting of the prisoners – incarcerated in the prison communities and returns their numbers to the communities where they originally resided. This creates a huge shortfall economically for the prison communities. For Cheshire, this constitutes a loss of grant money of \$2 million 800 and 75 thousand dollars in the ECS grant. Reason: prisoners have no income which increases the poverty level for this grant.

This is not unique for Cheshire. Imagine the loss for Enfield that has many more prisons than Cheshire.

Remember – we are still talking about the prison land of 300 acres in Cheshire on Rt. 10 which cannot be used for anything except prisoners.

My hope is that you will support my opposition to SB 980 so that all prison communities can receive SOME compensation for their losses.

Thank you!

Mary G. Fritz