

**Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 6931 – An Act Concerning New Municipal Employees and the Municipal Employee Retirement System**

**Labor & Public Employees Committee – Public Hearing  
March 3, 2015**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 6931, an act that would modify the Connecticut Municipal Employee Retirement System (CMERS) by providing member municipalities with the option to create a defined contribution plan for new hires, “provided such plan has been subject to collective bargaining between such municipality and any labor organization representing such employee or member.”

Mansfield’s regular employees working 20 or more hours per week and our full-time firefighter/EMT’s participate in MERS. Many of our non-certified school employees are also enrolled in MERS.

In regards to HB 6931, Mansfield’s Town Council supports the proposal from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) to create a new tier within CMERS. This tier would remain a defined benefit plan and would be modeled after Tier III of the state’s retirement plan. The primary benefit of CCM’s proposal is that the new tier in CMERS would prove more financially stable over time. The employer contribution to CMERS has quadrupled since 2002, which has placed a significant strain on municipal operating budgets during a very difficult economic period. The Town of Mansfield is looking to be fair and supports the need for an adequate retirement. The financial burden, however, needs to be more manageable and equitably distributed.

HB 6931 provides a good entry to a broader discussion concerning CMERS. From the perspective of a municipality, CMERS has many issues and is in need of reform. These issues include the employee contribution rate, the vesting period and the need to place additional limits on the amount of overtime that can be included in the benefit calculation. Furthermore, I would note that CMERS municipalities have one seat on the state retirement commission and that seat does not have the right to vote. My fellow municipal representatives and I are willing to work with the labor committee to reform CMERS to ensure that it remains financially sustainable for future retirees and taxpayers.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today, and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.