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Testimony Regarding

Proposed Bill 6259

An Act Concerning the Boundaries of Regional Economic Development Districts

made February 12, 2015 before the

Planning and Development Committee

The Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) **strongly supports Proposed Bill 6259** and urges the Committee to Raise this bill for further consideration and passage.

NECCOG is one of nine regional councils of governments in Connecticut. The General Assembly, after much study and discussion, consolidated the former fifteen regional planning organizations into nine regional councils of governments. The newly configured regional councils of governments are the intended foundation for regional actions in our state. This includes a range of activities — including economic development. Proposed House Bill 6259 would bring into line Connecticut's regional economic development efforts with the regionalism work already in place (At the end of this testimony is our suggested language for a raised bill) through our COGs - such as transportation planning and comprehensive land use planning. The Bill would also mitigate further fragmentation of our already very fragmented state in terms of how we provide services.

The CEDS process and EDD designation is very important to our region. It provides us a public/private — federal/state recognized approach to economic development planning and potential access to funding. NECCOG as part of a partnership with the now dissolved Windham Region Council of Governments has had in place a federally approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS - which is a basic requirement to become an Economic Development District) since 2002. In 2012 we were granted Connecticut Economic Development District status. The COG reconfiguration changes significantly our EDD and we have decided to re-start a CEDS and EDDs with that new configuration. That process is currently underway and we anticipate completing it later this year.

When the current law to enable economic development district was passed in 2010 (Public Act 10-168) the consensus was that there should be no more than eight EDDs. This was predicated on the assumption that there would be no more than eight planning organizations in Connecticut. The current law also allows EDDs to be formed around the eight Connecticut counties — which, of course are not functioning units. However, as a result of an OPM study completed in 2013 and much local discussion our state ended up with nine regions (effective January 1, 2015,) — all of which are councils of governments. Proposed House Bill 6259 acknowledges the changes that have occurred since 2010 and places EDD in the context of legislative actions regarding regionalism.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on this bill. If you have any questions, please contact: John Filchak, NECCOG Executive Director at 860-774-1253 or john.filchak@neccog.org