



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
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MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
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Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Public Testimony
March 22, 2016

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 466 AN ACT CONCERNING PROPERTY TAXES AND PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF PROPERTY TAXES

Good Afternoon Co-Chairs Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger; Vice Chairs Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, Representative Santiago; Ranking Members Senator Frantz, Representative Davis; and esteemed members of the Committee. My name is Gayle Mulligan and I proudly represent the 55th, serving the wonderful towns of Andover, Bolton, Hebron and Marlborough. I am writing today concerning SB 466.

While I certainly understand and can agree with the intent of the bill, there are areas which I would like to see amended. Specifically, I believe the 2.5% spending cap on municipal spending must be eliminated. This is particularly important to three of the four towns in my district. Andover, Hebron, and Marlborough make up Region 8 - RHAM High School and Middle School and while there are numerous benefits to having a regional school system, one potentially detrimental result is the effect that the regional education budget has on the independent town budgets. As it currently stands the budget for RHAM is split between the three towns based on percent of population. The regional school's Board of Education creates a budget which is then sent to all three towns for a vote. Unfortunately, if the regional budget passes by majority, any single municipality has no recourse even if their town voted it down. The town must adopt that budget and incorporate it into its overall budget that goes to the taxpayers. If the individual towns pass their budget under the 2.5% threshold but then the regional school budget passes and brings them over the threshold, the town could be facing a reduction in aid from the state. If budgets are all passed there is no recourse for the municipality under the structure of the bill as it is drafted. Nor is there any mention in the bill concerning how towns in a regional district are to deal with this type of situation. Eliminating the cap would give towns the flexibility needed to adequately fund their budget.

I also believe the municipal spending cap highlights the often cantankerous relationship between the towns and state. Right now the state is cutting municipal aide, hospital funding, and more cuts then can be counted... where does that end up? In the laps of the municipalities who have no say or control. In effect they can't trust that the revenue they have will be enough to cover expenses. During the last two budget cycles the people, towns and businesses of Connecticut have endured the biggest and second biggest tax increase in history. But at the same time, the state which has been unable to pay its bills is mandating to the municipalities how they should spend. And now that same government is renegeing on aid promised to the municipalities but at the same time telling them how to manage their budgets. I ask you, does that make any sense? Perhaps the state should come visit one of my towns in the 55th and take a look at how are balancing our budget.

Thank you and I ask the committee to finally remove this hypocritical restraint on the municipalities of Connecticut.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gayle Mulligan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Gayle Mulligan

State Representative, 55th District