Testimony
Betsy Gara, Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the
Labor & Public Employees Committee
February 25, 2016

SB-134 - AN ACT CONCERNING SEVERE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENT AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) urges lawmakers to reject efforts to expand workers' compensation benefits in ways that will significantly increase costs for municipalities.

Connecticut's small towns and cities have tremendous respect for our police and firefighters. However, we are very concerned that SB-134 opens the door for changes in workers' compensation that will place a heavy burden on our towns and property taxpayers.

According to the Office of Fiscal Analysis in analyzing a similar proposal last year, the cost to municipalities will be highly variable given the increases in premium costs and a wide range of potential per claim costs. Although towns are working hard to control local costs, declining revenues and increased costs associated with providing services is taking its toll. Expanding workers' compensation benefits at this time will further strain local budgets and put more pressure on towns to increase property taxes or make cuts in programs or personnel.

SB-134 establishes a difficult precedent by expanding benefits based on subjective standards that will invite confusion, making it difficult to manage workers' comp claims. Expanding workers' compensation coverage in this manner will further strain local budgets and put more pressure on towns to increase property taxes or lay off personnel.

Therefore, COST urges you to ***oppose* SB-134.**

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. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.

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