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Support for Substitute SB 422: An Act Concerning Residential Water Rates, Public Drinking Water Supply Emergencies and Sellers of Bottled Water

Hearing date: 3/11/2016

Dear Senator Cathy Osten, Representative Philip Miller, and Planning and Development Committee Members:

Although I vote regularly, I am not a political person. Before January, I'd attended just one local Town Council meeting. I'd even consumed my share of bottled water without a second thought, especially because I recycled the bottles. I thought I was a good citizen because I minded my own business.

That changed when I heard about Niagara's plans to open their 23rd plant in our town. Maybe you've already noticed, but water is the new oil. Here's why:

This debate is about control and assuring water resources for the future. Who controls CT's irreplaceable water resources: The Public? Private companies like Niagara seeking to extract a profit? The MDC and other quasi public water commissions with little state oversight? (Just so you know, the CEO of another water bottling company, Nestle, has stated that "access to water should not be a public right," and that all water supplies should be privatized by the government.")

What happens if there's a drought? While MDC's CEO Scott Jellison said that Niagara Bottling would "work with them" in case of drought, Niagara's history reveals something else. When Groveland, FL was in the middle of a drought, the town challenged the permit because the St. Johns River Water Management District—their local water commission—was still granting water rights to the company while warning of a water shortage and restricting usage. After three years of bitter fighting, the City Council members unanimously approved a \$1.35 million settlement with Niagara, which won the right to pump water from the Floridan Aquifer over the city's objection.

Do we really want CT water held hostage by a private, California-based company? Is the MDC acting in the public's best interest by selling water even though their mandate is to develop and **maintain a safe yield of clean water for residential** and commercial use?

And what about Niagara's plans to supplement MDC water with spring water? How will that effect the quality of residents' well water?

A revised SB 422 would address these concerns and more, and I support it. The bill as raised requires these revisions:

1. Section 1 should be directed at water bottling companies exporting water out of state **"... The sale of water to residential consumers be prioritized over the sale of water to commercial water bottling entities export water out of state for the duration of the drinking water supply emergency."**

2. The language of Section 2 does not currently represent the intent of the bill – it should state that: **"Notwithstanding any provisions of the general status or any charter or special act, no municipality or entity shall charge the holder of a license for the business of bottling water issued pursuant to section 21a–136 of the general water rate less than any other consumer for the sale of water."**

3. The language of section 3 needs to deal with the discounted Special Sewer Charges (now known as the Clean Water Project Charges), not simply "sewer rates" **"...pursuant to section 21a–136 of the general statutes a Clean Water Project Charge (formally known is a Special Sewer Service Charge) rate less than the residential consumer Clean Water Project Charge rate charged by such municipality or entity."**

4. Re-establish a citizen watch dog committee for the MDC.

5. Place a moratorium on any new water capacity agreements over 250,000 gallons/day until the State Water Plan is completed and enacted. Require a water diversion permit for water transfers over 50,000 gallons/day out of watersheds by truck.

Thank you for caring for CT water.