

Testimony submitted in support of An Act Concerning Residential Water Rates, Public Drinking Water Supply Emergencies and the Sellers of Bottled Water (**Substitute SB 422**), to be considered in a Legislative Hearing Friday March 11th, 2016 at 11am.

To the Planning and Development Committee:

I am writing in support of An Act Concerning Residential Water Rates, Public Drinking Water Supply Emergencies and the Sellers of Bottled Water (Substitute SB 422).

The debacle in Bloomfield over the proposed Niagra bottling plant makes clear that legislative action is necessary to protect our greatest public resource after air—our water. The Niagra bottling plant, in fact, would endanger both resource, by turning a public asset—water—into a private commercial commodity, and by producing millions of plastic bottles *per day* that harm the environment in manufacture, transportation, and disposal.

Our water should not be commodified by turning it over to a private commercial company who intends to use this public resource as a product *in itself* to make a profit. This is vastly different from a commercial enterprise that needs water to produce a product. For water bottlers, water itself—*our* water—is the profit-making product. That is a misuse of this public resource.

The bill before you will address another aspect of the Niagra deal that is noxious to the public interest: it will eliminate the possibility that the interests of a private commercial enterprise will be put above the interests of the towns and citizens who share water from the MDC. Instead of protecting a private commercial extractor of this public resource, the bill will protect the citizens and towns who should be the MDC's first concern. Science makes clear that climate change is real and that its effects are uncertain. In the event of a drought, it's insane to put private water bottling companies above the citizens of the state.

Second, the bill will prevent commercial water bottling companies from receiving discounts to extract and profit from massive use of public water. Why on earth should a private company receive discounts that encourage it to use more and more of this precious resource for its own profit? Especially when the by-products of that use are massive amounts of environmental? Our state should be considering the elimination of plastic water bottles, not encouraging the manufacture of billions of them.

It is similarly senseless to give water bottlers a discount on sewer service charges, as the Niagra deal currently does. Connecticut ratepayers have funded the infrastructure that creates the clean water that Niagra and other bottlers now want to profit from. That is wrong, and this bill would correct it.

Further, the bill would re-establish a citizen MDC watchdog committee. It has become frighteningly apparent that such a committee is necessary, since according to the MDC, it is helpless on its own to say no to any entity that wants its water, and is not responsible for informing its client towns about its decisions.

The bill also would impose a moratorium on any new largescale deals concerning public water until after the State Water Plan is completed, which will address the consequences of water bottling companies diverting water out of watersheds. This is sensible.

Essentially the bill strives for prudence and fairness, the opposite qualities of the Niagra deal. Please support this bill.

Steve Kemper