

**Testimony by**

**James Hayden, First Selectman, Town of East Granby**

**Before the Planning and Development Committee  
March 11, 2016**

**SUPPORT SB 425:  
AAC MUNICIPAL TRANSPARENCY, EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Chairs Senator Osten and Representative Miller and members of the Planning and Development Committee, my name is James Hayden and I serve as First Selectman of East Granby. I have with me today Lisa Pellegrini, the First Selectman in Somers, and Secretary of the Capitol Region Council of Governments. I come before you today in support of **SB 425: An Act Concerning Municipal Transparency, Efficiency and Accountability**.

For more than 45 years, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) has served Hartford and surrounding municipalities – now 37 with a population of 1 million residents -- and helped them gain significant efficiencies in the spending of taxpayer dollars through a wide variety of cooperative purchasing and other regional service sharing initiatives.

The state is in the final phase of a two year plan to connect all participating municipalities to the CEN/Nutmeg Network using state grant funding, in addition to schools, libraries and public safety facilities already on the network. The millions of dollars of investment to connect 97 Connecticut municipalities reflects the state's acknowledgment of the value of a publicly run broadband fiber backbone for the purposes of communication, efficient local service delivery, and operational cost savings.

With the support of the Speaker of the House, CRCOG has been working with the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc. (CCAT), the CT Council of Small Towns and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities to launch programs that assist local governments in leveraging the CEN/ Nutmeg Network technology in their operations. There are five state funded demonstration projects developed in the 2014 Municipal Opportunities for Regional Efficiency (MORE) Commission's Regions group nearing completion and underway that will allow towns to benefit from back office functions to achieve cost savings and improve the efficiency of local government operations and service delivery. These demonstration projects depend on the CEN/Nutmeg Network and include Hosting Services (local government data storage

and back-up/disaster recovery), Voice over Internet Protocol telephones, streaming video, electronic document management, and human resources functions. In addition, plans are being made to develop even more back office services such as GIS mapping and payroll and accounting services. After the first phase of the projects has been completed, participation will be widened to many more towns and cities in the state.

To support the piloting of these services, CRCOG and CCAT also received over \$500,000 in state funding to build a CRCOG Data Center that sits directly on the Nutmeg Network to house the software and data associated with these five projects. Preliminary estimates are that the CRCOG data center costs are about half of the cost of comparable commercial cloud hosting. The business model of the data center moving forward allows for the center to be relatively self-sufficient economically (including expansion and upgrades).

Let me provide testimony in two areas: benefits of the bill as written and responses to possible issues relating to the bill.

### **Benefits of the Bill**

- The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) strongly believes that there is a need for the Connect Connecticut Citizen Relationship Management (CRM) system outlined in SB 425 to facilitate local government service provision. In fact, CRCOG has applied twice to the Regional Performance Incentive Program grant fund for the same type of Citizen Relationship Management system highlighted as an important tool in the bill (December 2014 and December 2015).
- CRCOG stands ready to serve as a partner to the development of a local government CRM system, both from the project development/management side and from the hosting environment perspective. As I outlined, our CRCOG Data Center provides a reliable, resilient and redundant home at half the cost of commercial data hosting.

### **Concerns with SB-425**

- Issue: There is no provision in this proposal for a centralized procurement or management of a roll out of the Citizen Relationship Management system. If each of the 20 towns proposed to receive this grant “go it alone,” then we have lost an important part of the potential efficiency of establishing such a system.
- Issue: Though CRCOG has been a proponent the last two grant cycles of this type of system, it has not stood up so far against other proposals to be funded. To carve out this function sets a precedent for the Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) application process and opens the door to other potential carve outs in the future. We believe that funding to groups of municipalities via Councils of Government is to be preferred to individual awards to and supports the purpose of the RPIP.

CRCOG greatly appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on this proposed bill and looks forward to providing any additional assistance the Committee may request.