



City of West Haven Health Department
355 Main Street
West Haven, CT 06516

Maureen B. Lillis, MPH
Director of Health

Phone: 203-937-3660, Fax: 203-937-3976

March 6, 2016
Public Health Committee

Testimony: SB 355-An Act Concerning Local Health Districts and Health Directors

Members of the Public Health Committee: My name is Maureen Lillis, and I serve as the Director of Health for the City of West Haven. I have served in this capacity since 2010. **I oppose SB 355.** Local Health Directors are required by Statute to submit an annual report to the Connecticut Department of Public Health. The content of this report allows the Commissioner to review and audit our performance. The City of West Haven has a population of approximately 56,000 residents. The Mayor and Commissioner of Human Resources of our city provide oversight of the West Haven Health Department.

Local Health Directors are already subject to oversight by the Commissioner of Public Health. The CGS 19a -2a states, "The commissioner shall have authority over directors of health and may, for cause, remove any such director." As agents of the commission, local health directors are vested with authority to protect and enforce local public health. Additional statutory language such as the proposed legislation which mandates specific time frames of audits, would overshadow this authority as well as overwhelm a seriously underfunded workforce.

The CT DPH will require additional staffing in order to comply with this proposed language requiring additional funding. Funding to increase public health services should be directed to local health services. The proposed language does nothing to increase a Health Director's ability to respond locally. We must prioritize services. SB 355 serves to remove Local Health authorities' ability to prioritize based on the needs of the residents we serve in our own communities. Instead the proposed audit language will have us focus our resources on preparing for audits and checking a box for CT DPH accreditation.

Direct public health services are provided through local health departments, not the state Department of Public Health. CT DPH is a resource that provides subject matter experts, but the actual implementation of programming and code enforcement lies with the Local Health Authority and is contingent upon the needs of the local communities we serve. Local Health Directors have a direct obligation to the community they serve and to the LOCAL municipal leadership.

Thank you very much for your consideration to the opposition of SB-355.

Phone (203) 937-3660: Fax (203) 937-3976
355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut, 06516
www.whhd.org