



***PUBLIC SAFETY &
SECURITY COMMITTEE***
March 8, 2016

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 96% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

HB 5544 “An Act Concerning the Consolidation of Public Safety Answering Points”

This bill would mandate the consolidation of *municipal* public safety answering points into *regional* or *multitown* public safety answering points (PSAPs). CCM appreciates the intent of this bill – **as regionalization occurs on a daily basis among many facets of local government and should be encouraged** – however, we have concerns regarding the approach HB 5544 would have, as it would be the proverbial stick looming over already strained local budgets.

While the bill does offer some financial incentives to help with consolidation through the regional performance incentive program (RPIP), it is only for a portion of operating costs associated with transitioning to a regional or multi-town PSAP. RPIP funding is frequently been sought after as a source to fill gaps in the state aid. As a result, funding for the program is stretched thin as it provides vital funding for other resources. While well intentioned, the funding available through HB 5544 to assist in consolidation could jeopardize the progress of equally important local-regional programs.

Funding is not the only obstacle to ensure proper consideration of PSAPs. There are a number of factors such as union contracts, collective bargaining, facility operations and management that need to be discussed and agreed to by all municipalities. Without these issues being unified, effective implementation will not occur.

Public safety officials rely on a certain degree of flexibility to (a) ensure the safety of their own communities, and (b) address the unique demands and concerns of their citizens. Therefore, local officials should continue to be afforded the discretion to determine which PSAPs work best for their communities – either operated locally or regionally – as they already do now. HB 5544 would hamper local authority to determine how public safety services are delivered by, among other things, recommending that sanctions be imposed on hometowns that do not comply with certain mandated thresholds

This bill will effect approximately 143 municipalities that have a population less than 40,000. In order for municipalities to implement the proposal properly, each would need to collaborate with an unknown number of other municipalities in order to reach the arbitrarily population threshold of 40,000. Forced regionalism does not breed success. Municipalities should be awarded for efforts to consolidate their PSAPs, but should not be threatened with punishments for failure to do so.

Make no mistake – local officials strive for more efficient means to operate local governments however, they equally require the option to determine how best to manage those communities – i.e. their public safety calls.



If you have any questions, please contact Mike Muszynski, Advocacy Manager of CCM at mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org or (203) 500-7556.

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