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Testimony Regarding

Raised Bill 5602

An Act Concerning Regionalism

made before the

Planning and Development Committee

March 11, 2016

Senator Osten, Representative Miller, members of the Planning and Development Committee - my name is John Filchak, Executive Director of the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments. I also come before you today as a member of the Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) where I chaired the Education Policy Working Group for the Regional Entities Subcommittee. **Raised Bill 5602 speaks directly to issues we examined at the MORE Commission and I urge your favorable consideration of this legislation.**

HB 5602, in part: (1) enables municipalities to make needed purchases through a COG or a RESC, (2) adds regional education service centers (RESCs) as eligible entities for the Regional Performance Incentive Program and (3) adds a new requirement for plans of conservation and development to examine the "need to promote regional efficiencies in education and educational opportunities.

RESCs and COGs are the building blocks for regionalism in Connecticut. The RESCs and the COGs share a unique position as regional facilitators for establishing the framework for cooperation, providing support, monitoring, evaluating, and disseminating best practices that can be replicated in other RESC/COG regions. They offer an established model for regional collaboration and innovation. RESC/COG partnerships should be leveraged to promote and support regional collaboration for both school districts and municipalities. The State can strengthen existing regional infrastructure/capacity, using RESCs and COGs, to support regional initiatives and collaboration to take advantage of the existing regional infrastructure and expertise that the RESCs and COGs can provide. HB5601 would clarify existing statute to approve RESC and COG bid processes that meet state bid requirements - to allow school districts to purchase products and services at the lowest possible cost.

The Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) was established to provide funds for COGs and economic development districts to pilot new/innovative programs to foster regionalism - leading to efficiencies and cost savings. HB 5602 adds RESCs as an eligible entity for RPIP grants. This is a logical extension of the program and provides increased opportunities to foster regional innovations.

Each town, region and the State is required to periodically produce a plan of conservation and development (POCD). A POCD is a blueprint for the future - including capital investments. Currently, statutes that direct local, regional and the state plans specify a range of subjects to be considered. However, there is no explicit direction to include efficiencies in education in long-range planning. Given the importance of education generally and the significant resources invested locally and statewide - it seems logical that we engage in long-term planning integrated into the other elements important to our state, regions and towns.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.