

**Testimony by  
Lisa Pellegrini, First Selectman, Town of Somers, and  
Secretary, Capitol Region Council of Governments**

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

**SUPPORT HB5603: AAC REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

Chairs Senator Osten and Representative Miller and members of the Planning and Development Committee, my name is Lisa Pellegrini and I serve as First Selectman of Somers and Secretary of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG). I have with me today Jim Hayden, the First Selectman in East Granby, also a town in the CRCOG region. I come before you today in support of **HB5603: AAC REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY**.

For more than 45 years, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) has served Hartford and its surrounding municipalities – now 37 towns with almost 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.

We are strongly supportive of the additional of language that encourages the addition of technology to “enhance efficiencies, foster collaboration, increase transparency and access to information and reduce costs” in local, regional and statewide Plans of Conservation and Development. We would ask that you consider a pilot in the Capitol Region COG to attempt this revision in our region and share our experience with the other 8 Councils of Government as part of a statewide roll-out.

Connecting our 38 towns to the Nutmeg Network is a foundation of many shared service initiatives that have been and are being launched. We are concerned about cuts in funding for Nutmeg Network installations and operational costs. The support provided by the two year Municipal Connection Plan implemented by DAS-BEST has been vital to encouraging use of the Nutmeg Network as a catalyst for broadly incorporating technology efficiencies in local government operations. The effectiveness of this support is apparent, only six municipalities were connected to the Nutmeg Network before the Municipal Connection Plan passed in the 2013 session. There are now 97 municipalities either connected or in the queue to connect. While setting a sunset for Nutmeg installation and operational support may well be appropriate, to pull this support now, when 72 municipalities have yet to connect, is premature in our view.

CRCOG has been working tirelessly with the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT) to encourage use of the Nutmeg Network through five state funded demonstration projects across the state. These projects are part of Speaker Sharkey's Municipal Opportunities for Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission efforts to show how using the state's high-speed data fiber Nutmeg Network can impact municipal efficiency and narrow the technology gap that exists between Connecticut towns. As the first three Nutmeg Network Demonstration Projects near the end of their pilot phases, we are already seeing evidence of savings. The CRCOG Nutmeg Service Cloud hosting services are half that of commercially available services. VoIP telephone service is at least half the cost of traditional copper and the competitively bid systems offered are a greater savings past that. The streaming video project has competitive rates for those who currently broadcast their meetings streaming and on demand on the internet. The data center created to house these and the last two demonstration projects (Electronic Document Management and Human Resources Portal) has the potential to provide a low upfront cost to quickly develop and deploy additional services as we move forward.

The Nutmeg Network is becoming a vital backbone of municipal efficiencies through sharing that is just beginning to bear fruit. We believe that maintaining the core funding of the Nutmeg network will lead to increased support municipal use of the Nutmeg Network and to efficiencies and savings in the future.

We strongly support language that encourages the addition of technology to "enhance efficiencies, foster collaboration, increase transparency and access to information and reduce costs" in local, regional and statewide Plans of Conservation and Development. CRCOG greatly appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on this proposed bill and looks forward to providing any additional assistance the Committee may request.