



Testimony on House Bills 5601, 5602, 5603, 5604

Submitted by Suzanne Bates, Policy Director

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Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Miller, Senator Linares and Representative Aman.

My name is Suzanne Bates. I am the policy director for the Yankee Institute for Public Policy, a Connecticut-based free market think tank.

I am here to express concerns about House Bills 5601, 5602, 5603, 5604.

General concerns on these bills:

Connecticut has a long history of local governance. This is something we should celebrate. We value home rule because we value civic engagement, and people are best able to engage with their government when it is close to them.

Recently in Connecticut there has been a movement to replace the principle of home rule with regionalization. While it is good to **lift any state regulations** that stop municipalities from being able to cooperate and find efficiencies **on their own**, forcing municipalities to cooperate is not something the state should do. Forced regionalization will only erode home rule, which often leads to less accountability and less transparency as far as how taxpayer dollars are spent.

If the state has a role here, it is to assist municipalities by providing them with information on how greater efficiencies can be achieved. The state should not attempt to force or coerce municipalities by withholding or threatening to withhold state funds if municipalities do not act the way the state wants them to.

Specific concerns:

House Bill 5601

The Connecticut Transportation Institute should report its findings to municipalities, not the state, so local leaders can decide if they'd like to adopt any of the proposed measures.

House Bill 5602

Again, it is good to free up municipalities to work through their COGs to achieve savings, if that is what they would like to do. This should not be forced on them. Greater clarity is needed to understand what “educational opportunities” means in Section 5, paragraph (b). This is very open ended – what is the broader goal of this legislation?

House Bill 5603

The state should not force municipalities to add the application and use of technology to their conservation and development plans. A better way forward would be to encourage the sharing of best practices in terms of technology and transparency.

House Bill 5604

This legislation applies a hammer to municipalities if they do not follow the state’s requirements on regionalization. Instead, the state could provide a tool that is used to educate and encourage cooperation and greater efficiencies. Section 4 should be eliminated entirely.