FOR THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY OF RIVERS ALLIANCE OF CONNECTICUT
February 2, 2017

RSB 753 AAC The Viability of Expanding the Bottled Water Industry in Connecticut

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is a statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship.

And Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

Rivers Alliance is opposed to this bill, although the concept will be taken up by the Water Planning Council and others in the course of developing the comprehensive state water plan. This is expressed in the testimony of Jack Betkoski, Chairman of the Water Planning Council.

Our objections are, first, that one of the features of recent support for water bottling operations has been discounts for high-volume users and absence of prioritization criteria for customers. Common sense suggests that some water users, such as hospitals and families, should have priority over less vulnerable customers. Second, the bill does not give weight to evaluating the environmental impacts of large, new water withdrawals for out-of-basin and out-of-state conveyance.

Third, the people of Connecticut have made major investments and sacrifices to maintain the superior quality of our drinking water. No other state, with the partial exception of Rhode Island, has such a high standard for its water supply. Connecticut will not allow a source that has received a waste discharge upstream to be used for potable water. We also have longstanding laws protecting the lands around drinking water sources. These standards mean that we cannot use major sources, such as the Connecticut River, which would be used in other states. As a result, new water sources almost invariably are our best aquifers, wetlands, headwaters, and cold-water streams. Any bottled water being sold out of state does not need to come from these valuable AA waters, which are diminishing year by year. This water has been protected by the people of Connecticut and is held in trust for them.

Thank you for your attention. We would be happy to answer questions.

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