



City of Milford, Connecticut

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Testimony of:

Benjamin G. Blake, Mayor
City of Milford

Deepa D. Joseph, MPH, Director of Health
City of Milford

Regarding:

Raised Bill No. 7170 An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding the Integration of Municipal Health Departments into Regional Health Districts

&

H.B. 5757 An Act Prohibiting the Department of Public Health From Requiring the Consolidation of Municipal Health Authorities

To the members of the Public Health Committee:

On behalf of the City of Milford, thank you for affording us the opportunity to provide comments regarding the CT Department of Public Health's recommendations for integration of health departments and districts into Regional Health Districts.

Many of us have heard the phrase, "Think globally and act locally." Milford has a local health department that epitomizes what it means to put this phrase into practice. As the Mayor of a city that relies on the services provided by our local health department and has access to our department on a 24/7 basis, I support H.B. 5757 and am opposed to the business model proposed in HB 7170 which aims to ultimately establish 9 public health districts based on Council of Government (COG) regions.

The United Health Foundation's 2016 America's Health Rankings report places Connecticut as the 3rd healthiest state in the country, despite the fact that that State investment into local public health has decreased over the past 15 years. Along with the efforts of various partners, this success in achieving such positive health outcomes is largely attributable to the work of our local health departments within our communities. Currently, our local health department provides services above and beyond the "Ten Essential Services of Public Health," including but not limited to, housing code enforcement, anti-blight code enforcement, school nursing services, human services, and shelter operations and management for the city of Milford.

The quality and quantity of public health services is exceptional in the city of Milford. The Milford Health Department serves approximately 53, 206 residents; the proposed COG-based regional health district would serve a population of approximately 862,477 residents (South Central COG population estimate). Such an exponential increase in population served will undoubtedly lead to decreased access to services, higher fees for business owners and residents, and increased costs to our municipality.

Though the city of Milford and the Milford Health Department sees the value of working on regional initiatives and has lead the effort for regional activities in areas such as asthma and emergency preparedness, we also recognize the value and importance of the local identification and provision of services to meet the public health needs of our residents. Public health needs at the local level are diverse and require local engagement and flexibility to meet those needs. In an economic climate where municipalities are consistently being asked to do more with less, this proposal will result in the opposite—decreased services for our residents and increased costs. The implementation of HB 7170 would serve to alter the current culture of excellence in provision of public health services and would, therefore, be a disservice to the residents of Milford.

We appreciate the good work of this committee and, as such, we encourage you to oppose H.B. 7170 and support HB 5757 while working together with our local health departments to strengthen and improve the health of our citizens.

Respectfully Submitted,

Benjamin G. Blake, Mayor
City of Milford

Deepa D. Joseph, MPH, Director of Health
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