

Statement in opposition to Raised Bill No.7170: Concerning the Integration of Municipal Health Departments into Regional Health Districts.

Public health issues begin and end locally. Municipal health employees are dedicated exclusively to the towns and schools we serve. We have intimate knowledge of city businesses, neighborhoods and **most importantly know our local partners when responding to an emergency. Regionalizing health services will not allow for these relationships to thrive.**

Public health needs of a local community are constantly evolving; that diversity requires individual knowledge and adaption. The Milford Health Department is a small department with a host of responsibility above and beyond the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) 10 Essential Public Health Services.

The health department currently responds to calls from the Mayor's office, Milford Fire & Police Departments **24/7/365, for real-time assistance** to evaluate situations of life and safety. Many municipalities rely on their health department as the lead agency for response to an emergency as well as services outside of public health. **The Health Director, Environmental Sanitarians and public health nurses each represent a critical function in local response as outlined by Federal (FEMA) guidelines.** Milford provides municipal support outside of public health responsibilities with school nurses and sanitarians for emergency vaccination clinics, to staff the Emergency Evacuation Shelter during a storm, to house Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) & Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers and to conduct training exercises to **maintain incoming federal grant money.**

Our office works closely with the residents of Milford; to enforce local housing code, provide **no cost training** to volunteer food workers to ensure food safety at the Milford Oyster Festival and for all the city concession stands, and conducts in-home assessments for children with asthma at **no cost to residents.** The adoption of Milford's anti-blight ordinance gave inspectors an enforcement tool to work with home owners to maintain their property and **preserve local property values. The City of Milford will have to pay into the proposed Regional District above and beyond the 1 ½ % of the operating budget to sustain enforcement of these local ordinances and maintain these services.**

The loss of local oversight and control will be detrimental for business owners and communities. Fee schedules will significantly increase with regionalization putting the burden back on the communities and a loss of revenue to the municipalities. The cost of doing business and customer service in general will suffer. Permit & licensing, plan review, questions and information are currently handled expeditiously by technical staff made available on an in-office rotation basis. There is no inconvenience to residents and business owners to travel long distances. **Customer service is often handled at the time of inquiry or same day.**

I support **Proposed H.B. No. 5757: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH FROM REQUIRING THE CONSOLIDATION OF MUNICIPAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES** and implore the Public Health Committee to keep the current comprehensive local public health system across the state intact in order to maintain the quality of public health services and the structure to support the individual need of Connecticut's municipalities and residents.

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