



**CONNECTICUT LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION VOTERS**

March 9, 2017

To: Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee

From: Lori Brown, Executive Director, CT League of Conservation Voters

Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 7221 AAC Access to Water Planning Information**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments on the need for access to water company information that is essential for the proper management of our state's public water resources.

CTLCV urges you to restore the public's right to know how decisions are being made about the future of our state's most precious natural resource. A huge amount of work and negotiations have been taking place to prepare a statewide water plan. However, key information is still being withheld from the public that is needed to make informed decisions on how to best manage this important public trust resource for the greater good of our state, its citizens, and the environment.

Citizens have had to resort to complaints under the Freedom of Information Act for the most basic data about how much water is controlled by water companies, the location and quality of particular water sources, and how much water can be safely moved from one source to another place. And still, this information is being withheld from citizens who wish to provide informed input to help shape the water plan, as well as from the experts appointed by the state to present this plan to the legislature!

CTLCV supports the testimony of Rivers Alliance of Connecticut presented by Margaret Miner—widely respected as a leading expert on water issues across the state and region. We defer to her testimony with regards to the specifics of what provisions are needed in HB 7221. But we echo the great frustration of citizens who have been denied access to information by the Department of Public Health and our state's water utilities.

Connecticut is at a critical new stage in the effort to protect our state's increasingly threatened public waters—both for people and for the health of our environment. There are systemic problems with the state's ability to oversee and manage this precious resource, as evidenced by the ongoing battle over large, unchecked water withdrawals allowed under Connecticut's outdated and dysfunctional system of grandfathered water registrations. It is particularly important at this time to allow for greater

transparency of water data to ensure the best possible protections for our state's water are put in place for present AND FUTURE water needs. Please support HB 7221.

Thank you for considering this testimony as you deliberate.

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