



TESTIMONY TO THE CGA PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE ON HB 7221 (RAISED):
AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO WATER PLANNING INFORMATION
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MARCH 13, 2017

Sen. Terry Gerratana, Sen. Heather Bond Somers, Rep. Jonathan Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee:

This testimony supports Raised HB 7221 as a necessary approach to sound management of Connecticut's water resources.

In the last year, Connecticut has had a number of wake-up calls concerning its waters.

First, we have realized that our environmental review laws and protocols contain a loop-hole when it comes to regulating inter-basin transfers by any means other than pipelines. That gap was discovered as the private, California based Niagara Bottling Company was establishing its facility in Bloomfield. It was not local officials or regulators or legislators who made the discovery; it was citizens.

Second, we have realized that our water resources are not unlimited. Last year's drought had devastating consequences on our agriculture, horticulture, forests, and – even more – on our confidence that we will always have enough of this critical resource. A "Climate Preparedness Report Card" prepared just two years ago to rate state adaptation planning gave Connecticut an A-, but drought was not even a topic for evaluation in that study. We are newly awakened to the seriousness of water planning and policy in the Northeast. Here, too, the awakening has resulted in large part from public discussion and deliberation about water.

As climate change progresses and the new state water plan is put in place, we cannot expect a consistently smooth path forward. There will be unanticipated issues. There will be stresses on our reservoirs and water infrastructure. There will be economic and environmental dilemmas. The scrutiny of diverse experts and the public will be critical for good decision making.



HB 7221 provides a framework to ensure scrutiny of water management decisions by stakeholders, while protecting reasonable privacy of water utilities for security purposes. By specifying specific, security-related details of water systems that may be held in confidence, the bill balances confidentiality with public access in a way that will support the involvement of stakeholders in water management decisions. This, in turn, will support effective policy going forward.

Thank you.