



Farmington River Watershed Association, Inc.

749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

(860) 658-4442 Fax (860) 651-7519 www.frwa.org

March 10, 2017

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

Please accept these comments from FRWA **in support of Bill 7221, AAC ACCESS TO WATER PLANNING INFORMATION.**

In the past year, I have represented FRWA as a participant and/or observer in the development of the state's Water Plan and the establishment of Water Utility Coordinating Committees across the state. It has been obvious throughout that time that the exemption of water companies to FOIA requests for water supply information, and the heavy redaction of water supply plan documents that are released for public use, are an unnecessary and unreasonable hindrance to stakeholder participation in water planning. Much of the withheld information would not pose a security risk if released (indeed, some of it is available elsewhere anyway). The public has a right to know, for example, how much water is controlled by water companies, the general location and quality of particular water sources, and how much water can be safely moved from one source to another place without adverse impacts to water supplies or ecological demands.

Bill 7221 offers an alternate way to protect the water infrastructure information that really should be kept secure, while giving all participants and commentators in water planning access to the other information they must have, in order to do their job. Water planning should include public and stakeholder input that's based on knowledge; otherwise, public participation can too easily be dismissed as meaningless and unimportant.

Please pass Bill 7221 so that the public can have access to the data they need for informed participation in water planning.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eileen Fielding". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Eileen Fielding
Executive Director