

Testimony to the Public Health Committee

March 13, 2017

HB 7221 An Act Concerning Access to Water Planning Information

The South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA) is a non-profit, public corporation and political subdivision of the state. Our mission is to provide our customers with high quality water at a reasonable cost while promoting the preservation of watershed land and aquifers. We provide approximately 45 million gallons of water per day to some 430,000 consumers in 15 communities in our region. The source of this water is a system of watershed and aquifer areas that cover about 120 square miles within 24 municipalities. Much of our 27,000 acres of land is managed for watershed protection, timber resource conservation, wildlife habitat, open space, education, and research.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding **HB 7221, An Act Concerning Access to Water Planning Information**. As drafted, the RWA opposes HB 7221.

The RWA, along with the Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA), has been actively engaged with state regulatory agencies and environmental groups to clarify what information can be shared publically in support of local and state water resource planning versus what is critical to hold confidential for water system security purposes.

During the 2016 Legislative session, negotiations took place with stakeholders with the intent of explicitly defining water company information that should be withheld from public disclosure. It is important to recognize that considerable progress was achieved during these discussions and we believe a reasonable compromise to resolve this issue is within reach. This effort was supported in part by a November 3, 2015 CWWA memo to the Connecticut Water Planning Council.

The potential for individuals, terrorist organizations, and foreign governments to bring harm to water utility operations is a concern we take seriously. For example, in 2015, it was revealed in news reports that Iranian hackers had infiltrated the control system for a New York dam. With water utilities increasingly relying on automated control systems for water conveyance, treatment, distribution, and metering, cyberattacks are of increasing concern to the water industry. Therefore, publically releasing information that could help plan such attacks poses substantial risks.

Our position concerning information security has been largely guided by the 2008 federal Environmental Protection Agency and Water Resource Foundation (formally AWWARF) joint research publication *Identifying and Managing Potentially Sensitive Water Utility Information: A Decision Guide* and its companion document *Critical Information Policies for Water Utilities*. Together, these documents provide a valuable resource for state agencies and water utilities to guide when to release, withhold or restrict requested information. Although the proposed bill does contain provisions for protecting certain sensitive water supply information and data, it fails to provide for a process to identify and respond accordingly to future emerging threats, as aided by the professional judgment of security experts and state agencies.

Water utilities, regulators, and the environmental community have made significant progress in defining how water utility data and information can be reviewed, formatted, and released to support water planning, as evidenced by the current initiatives underway to create a State Water Plan and Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) Regional Coordinated Water System Plans. Both of these efforts have been conducted in a transparent manner and have been able to secure all needed data for completion. As a result, publically available reports and other deliverables released thus far contain an abundance of unredacted water system information including safe yield, margin of safety, and water demand data.

We look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure that adequate data for state water resource planning is made available, while ensuring the legitimate need to protect the security of public water supply systems and the health and safety of our customers is not jeopardized.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our position. If you have any questions, please contact Lori Vitagliano, Government and Public Relations Specialist at 203-401-2720, or lvitagliano@rwater.com