

Testimony of Robert M. Goodrich, Resident of the City of Waterbury, CT

February 23, 2018

Testimony Submitted to the Environment Committee

House Bill 5130: An Act Concerning the Sewage Spill Right-to-Know Act and Expanding Continuing Education Programs for Wastewater Operators.

In five years since the Public's Right To Know of a Sewage Spill Act was passed, there have been millions of unreported, late reported, or underreported gallons of sewage spilled into our waterways. The Bantam River in Morris, CT has had no less than seven spills but accurate reporting of the amount and damage done to this river has been elusive to find. My Dad and I have fished this river for over forty years and since the spills have increased the quality of the water and the quality of fishing have decreased. It's deeply disturbing because these spills are seemingly preventable. H.B. 5130 establishes a twenty-four-hour reporting timeline. H.B. 5130, to be effective, must have sufficient enforcement mechanisms for all of its suggested reporting, training, certification, and education programming.

In my hometown, the Brass City, Waterbury, CT we battle all types of environmental dilemmas. Most have been passed down from one generation to the next. This cycle of unrepentant polluting must be stopped. It's your job to keep us safe. Recently, the city of Waterbury's wastewater management facility was allowed to fall into disrepair through vast oversight failures and a woefully insufficient management team that was unable or unwilling to be truthful about its mistakes or effective at managing the plant, including Mayor O'Leary. In just the last six months the Naugatuck River and all of the people and wildlife that exist by it have had to survive millions of gallons of raw sewage being foisted upon it. H.B. 5130 and its mandates are good starting points.

Municipalities like Waterbury and ones in the suburbs like Morris, must be held accountable, be forced to be transparent, and regulated by the Department of Energy and Environment (DEEP) in ways that hold private and public agencies to standards that make sure the environment is improving and not degrading. DEEP's effectiveness and reach are certainly connected to its funding. Therefore H.B. 5130 must be enhanced so that reporting training, certification, education programming can be maintained and improved upon. Additionally DEEP must be funded in a manner that reflects an urgency to solve the crisis that exists in our state regarding sewage spills. I urge this committee to quickly move an enhanced form of H.B. 5130 for a vote in front of the Connecticut General Assembly.

Respectfully,

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