



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
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Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Environment Committee
March 14, 2018**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) submits the following comments relative to **SB-7, AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE PLANNING AND RESILIENCY**.

COST *supports the intent* of the provisions in **SB-7** relating to the need for additional data and planning to respond to changes in sea levels, including flooding, along the coast and inland waterways.

Towns along the shoreline and tidal rivers have been assessing the impact of rising sea levels and undertaking a variety of measures to improve resiliency and address concerns regarding flooding, including adopting flood ordinances, raising roads, and developing coastal-resiliency plans.

However, we do have some concerns regarding the bill, as follows:

Section 9(f) of the bill *requires* municipal planning commissions to amend or update the municipal coastal boundary after the most recent update to the sea level change scenarios. Under the bill, this means the sea level change scenarios developed by UConn's Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaption (CIRCA) rather than the data compiled by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Based on these scenarios, which were released on October 19, 2017, CIRCA "recommends that Connecticut plan for sea level rise of 20 inches (50cm) higher than the national tidal datum in Long Island Sound by 2050..." It appears, then, that this change would move the boundary further inland, which will cause more property to fall under the Coastal Management Act (CGS 22a-90). It is unclear how this would impact existing homes and businesses in these areas. We have requested additional input from members as to the potential impact of this change.

In addition, Section 9(f) requires changes to the municipal coastal boundary to be submitted to the commissioner for review and approval. Although we understand the need to ensure that the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has the opportunity to comment on proposed changes affecting coastal areas, we don't believe DEEP should have any role in approving or disapproving local zoning regulations.



Section 14 of the bill requires municipalities in preparing any municipal evacuation plan or hazard mitigation plan to consider CIRCA's sea level rise scenarios rather than NOAA's. Again, we have requested additional input from members as to the potential impact of this change.

Section 16 of the bill creates a Connecticut Council on Climate Change and includes a representative of COST on the Council, which we appreciate. We would be pleased to serve on this Council.

COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.