

Legislative Committee

March 14, 2018

Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Members of the Environment Committee:

The Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce is a dynamic business organization with over 2,175 members that employ over 50,000 people in and around our service area. Our chamber represents businesses from all industry sectors and of all sizes, from Fortune 500 companies, to micro businesses.

The purpose of this letter today is to offer comments on behalf of the chamber regarding SB 427, An Act Concerning Public Trust Components of the State Water Plan.

Our chamber's Legislative Committee annually develops a public policy agenda to urge adoption of legislation and policies that encourage Connecticut businesses to invest and grow opportunities for good, well-paying jobs.

A key tenant of the Chamber's 2018 public policy agenda is to:

Ensure that state policies and regulatory programs, including the State Water Plan, appropriately balance the needs for public water supply, economic development, public health and safety, recreation and the environment.

As the CT. Water Works Association has correctly noted, after four years of productive, collaborative discussions among the Water Planning Council (WPC) and stakeholders, the Plan was revised at the last minute to reference the concept of public trust under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). This has led to significant concern within the business community about how this will impact the established water rights of public water suppliers, business and industry, agriculture, municipalities, and other water users.

We join with our fellow chambers and other business stakeholders in urging lawmakers to delete the references to public trust and Section 22a-15, CGS as pertaining to the development and implementation of the State Water Plan. A public policy issue of this importance should be handled by the elected members of the General Assembly who are directly accountable to the people of Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important issue.