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Testimony of Connecticut Water Company
Public Health Committee
March 20, 2018

**RB-5154 AN ACT CONCERNING WATER USAGE AND CONSERVATION DURING
DROUGHT CONDITIONS**

Connecticut Water Company **supports the overall intent of *RB-5154, AN ACT CONCERNING WATER USAGE AND CONSERVATION DURING DROUGHT CONDITIONS***, which would require that the Water Planning Council review and report on various drought response practices and authorities. We believe, however, that rather than undertake a lengthy review process, alternative language drafted by the Connecticut Water Works Association has the potential to immediately address many of the concerns voiced following the 2016 drought, especially in heavily impacted areas such as the southwest region of the state.

As a public water utility, Connecticut Water provides water service to more than 90,000 customers, or approximately 300,000 people in 56 towns in Connecticut. We maintain robust water conservation and emergency response plans in order for us to adequately respond to unplanned events, such as drought, that would otherwise affect our ability to deliver high quality drinking water and fire protection to the thousands of residential, commercial and industrial users throughout our service area.

Our response plans, like those of all water companies, contain various triggers that while necessarily distinct to each water system and source of supply, help dictate our response, including but not limited to conservation requests, use restrictions, and communication activities. Our experience in this area suggests it would be impractical to attempt to standardize the various triggers or what response actions need to be taken during a drought, given the uniqueness of each water company's supplies, water systems, and customer user profiles. We do believe appropriate drought trigger guidance has merit and have been actively engaged with the Connecticut Water Works Association and Ct Section AWWA in drafting such guidance for the benefit of all utilities. Similarly, guidance around response actions that could be tailored to each utility's unique customer base would be beneficial, and we would be pleased to participate in like efforts in that area.

We also believe drought status communications with state and local officials, in addition to customers, could be enhanced. To that end, we support CWWA's language that would require that a water company "*post the notice of any voluntary or mandatory water use restrictions required by such plan on its Internet website; and provide notice of the status of the water system, any water use restrictions required by such plan, and a link to the water company's website with information on such restrictions, to the chief elected official and the local health director of each municipality served by the water system*".

Water use restrictions, once triggered, can be challenging to enforce. In some very limited areas of the state, local municipalities have developed a local water use ordinance. These ordinances are scarce and often unwieldy to manage, however, especially when water company systems cross multiple municipal boundaries. Rather, we support language that would give utilities limited fining authority and the right to terminate service when such service is in willful violation of any mandatory restrictions and is detrimental to the system as a whole. Such limited authority would improve utilities' ability to achieve and maintain customer compliance with a drought response plan, to the benefit of all water system users.

Finally, Connecticut Water participated in the drafting of the 2016 update to the *Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan*. We strongly support its finalization, adoption, and dissemination to all interested parties. We believe the updated Plan will help guide state and local drought preparedness and response, and allow for greater alignment with individual water utility response efforts.

We appreciate the Committee's interest in this issue and would be pleased to work with the Committee, Department of Public Health, and other stakeholders to enhance the state's overall drought planning and response capabilities.

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