



## Connecticut Department of Public Health

### Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

March 20, 2018

Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.  
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#### **Raised Bill 5154 - An Act Concerning Water Usage and Conservation During Drought Conditions**

The Department of Public Health (DPH), a member of the Water Planning Council (WPC) and one of the six state agencies that are currently working to update and revise the state's 2003 Drought Preparedness and Response Plan, would like to thank the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.

The bill would require the Water Planning Council to review state and local authorizations concerning drought events and then report triennially to the environment and public health committees on recommendations relating to such events, including standardization of advisories, watches, warnings, and emergencies; mandatory water use restrictions; public notification systems; and enforcement mechanisms.

DPH supports the intent of this bill, which aligns with the priorities identified in the draft [State Water Plan](#) as work to be implemented within the next twelve to eighteen months. Specifically, Section 6 of the State Water Plan highlighted the reconciliation of the Drought Preparedness and Response Plan with the State Water Plan as a priority. The draft State Water Plan noted that this reconciliation should include input from chief local officials and include considerations for model town ordinances and possible legislative changes. As noted above, DPH is currently working with the state agency drought team to update and revise the State's 2003 Drought Preparedness and Response Plan. In recognition of the ongoing work and collaboration on this issue, DPH respectfully requests that this bill be modified to require that the WPC provide a report with specific legislative recommendations on what a drought plan should include and how often it should be updated to the General Assembly for consideration during the 2019 legislative session. The proposed substitute language is below:

#### Proposed Substitute Language

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Water Planning Council, established pursuant to section 25-33o of the general statutes, shall review state and local authorizations concerning drought events in this state, including, but not limited to, state and local processes and authorities for the issuance of any notices regarding changing drought intensity and any attendant voluntary or mandatory water use restrictions during any such notice. Not later than February 1, 2019, the Water Planning Council, in

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accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, shall submit a report to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment and public health that makes legislative recommendations for the submission of a comprehensive drought plan based on such review. In developing the report, the Water Planning Council shall consider an appropriate interval in which to update a drought plan and items that should be incorporated into the plan, including, but not limited to: (1) a synthesis of such authorities, processes and water use restrictions, (2) recommendations for the standardization of initiating notices regarding changing drought intensity in this state, including, but not limited to, recommendations concerning the appropriate level of reservoir depletion and public drinking water supply depletion for triggering any such notice, (3) recommendations for the attendant voluntary and mandatory water use restrictions for any such notices regarding changing drought intensity, but not limited to, the implementation of mandatory water use restrictions during any such notice, (4) an effective public notification system for any such notices regarding changing drought intensity that utilizes any available Internet web sites and social media of the affected water companies and municipalities where such water companies operate and that recommends the appropriate drought level for use of emergency notification systems as part of such public notification system, and (5) the viability and effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms designed to assure compliance with any mandatory water use restrictions. In undertaking any such review and in developing any such report pursuant to this section, the Water Planning Council may consult with the advisory group established pursuant to subsection (c) of section 25-33o of the general statutes.

The Department would also like to share some of the efforts the Department has undertaken since the 2016-2017 drought to provide direction for future DPH drought planning initiatives. Recognizing the need for review of public water system drought trigger levels, the Department requested that all water companies subject to the requirements under [section 25-32d](#) of the general statutes review their trigger levels, and amend them to ensure that companies have sufficient time to adequately implement response actions. The Department requested that the revised drought trigger levels reflect an adequate number of remaining days of supply in time of an emergency. It is the Department's understanding that water companies are moving forward with these reviews and amendments. Water companies are required to submit any amendments to trigger levels to the Department.

The Department has also long supported water conservation on a year-round basis, and encourages water companies to implement conservation measures to ensure an adequate supply of water now, and into the future. Current law also requires water companies to address conservation in their planning and service. For example, under [section 25-32d](#) of the general statutes, which speaks to water supply plans, water companies are required to submit a water conservation plan that, which sets forth the water company's water conservation measures and drought triggers. In addition, [section 25-32k](#) of the general statutes requires water companies to annually provide to residential customers educational materials or information on water conservation, which in turn educates and encourages customers to conserve water.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.

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