

Public Health Committee

March 20, 2017

House Bill No. 5154: An Act Concerning Water Usage and
Conservation During Drought Conditions

Testimony Submitted by:

The Metropolitan District
Hartford, Connecticut

The Metropolitan District (the “MDC”), a specially-chartered municipal corporation which includes the municipalities of Bloomfield, East Hartford, Hartford, Newington, Rocky Hill, West Hartford, Wethersfield and Windsor, is the provider of potable water services to over 400,000 people located within the eight member towns and parts of East Granby, Farmington, Glastonbury, Portland, South Windsor and Windsor Locks. In addition, the MDC provides wastewater treatment services to the customers located and residing within its eight member towns with four water pollution control facilities located throughout the MDC region.

The MDC submits this testimony in order to express its concerns with House Bill. No. 5154 which would require the Water Planning Council (WPC), every three years, to report to the General Assembly a review of State and local processes and authorities for the issuance of drought advisories, drought watches and warnings and emergencies and any attendant voluntary or mandatory water use restrictions. In particular, the bill requires that the WPC “synthesize” the various State and local authorities, processes and water use restrictions and, among other things, make recommendations for the “standardization of initiating drought advisories, watches, warnings, and emergencies in this state...”

As the MDC has expressed in the past, it does not believe that it is prudent or in the public’s best interest to develop a standard or uniform approach to drought advisories, watches or warnings; every water utility located in the State is different, and a “one size fits all” approach simply will not work. If such “standardization” were to occur, it would likely create confusion among the public and the people that each respective water utility serves. As the State experienced a short time ago, when certain parts of the State experienced drought-like conditions, other parts of the State did not even approach the initial drought triggers. Some water utilities derive their water resources from underground supplies and others rely primarily upon surface water reservoirs; this is only one of a myriad of differences that exist among the thousands of water utilities that are located in this State. We should not strive for “standardization.”

Currently, each water utility is required to provide to the Department of Public Health an emergency contingency plan which provides in great detail the steps that that water utility will take when certain drought benchmarks for that utility are triggered. This approach recognizes the differences that exist among each water utility. With water utilities

working in close collaboration with the Department, the public's interest is well served, and the water utility and the regulatory bodies are able to react in such a manner to ensure that the appropriate steps for that particular water utility and its customers are taken.

“Standardization” of initiation of drought advisories and the like should not be the goal of this General Assembly. It very well may do more harm than good.

The MDC thanks the Committee for its consideration of these comments on the bill before you today.