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

***HB-5489 AN ACT CONCERNING REPLACEMENT OF LEAD SERVICE LINES  
BY A WATER COMPANY AND WATER TESTING***

Connecticut Water Company joins with our colleagues in the Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA), in supporting programs that allow for the replacement of lead service lines, as proposed in Section 1 of ***HB-5489 AN ACT CONCERNING REPLACEMENT OF LEAD SERVICE LINES BY A WATER COMPANY AND WATER TESTING***. We greatly appreciate the Committee raising the bill on this important and timely issue. We also supported a bill with similar provisions, RB 5345, raised in the Energy and Technology Committee.

Connecticut Water provides water service to more than 90,000 customers, or approximately 300,000 people in 56 towns in Connecticut. As a public water utility, we have a commitment to public health and safety and are focused on ensuring the quality of water delivered to our customers.

The tragic events in Flint, Michigan highlighted the significant public health risks of lead in the mains, lines or services in the water system or in the plumbing or fixtures in customers' homes. To be clear, there was a unique combination of facts and circumstances, including a number of operational failures that compounded the events in Flint. Prior to the incident, the water department had changed their source of water supply without appropriate review of the new source water quality or necessary adjustments to their corrosion control program to ensure the quality of the drinking water.

The regulatory requirements and oversight by the Department of Public Health in Connecticut certainly limit the risks but the reality is that, even with effective corrosion control programs and professionally operated systems, there is a risk to customers if there is lead in their internal plumbing or the service line from the water main to their home.

Connecticut Water has joined with other water professionals and a broad range of state and national organizations representing public health, housing, environmental, and municipal interests participating on the National Lead Service Line Replacement Collaborative. The mission of the group is simply to 'accelerate voluntary lead service line replacement in communities across the United States.' They have compiled technical information, outlined ways to initiate the process at the state or local level, and developed strategies to garner consensus and local support, identified funding options, and examined potential barriers to success.

Certainly a significant barrier to addressing this public health concern is adequate funding. While water companies may be able to fund and replace the portion of the lead service line owned and maintained by the company, it can be difficult to expect customers to bear the costs to replace the portion of the line which they own and are responsible to maintain and/or replace. Further, research has shown that if the company replaces their portion of the service line and the customer does not, there is actually a greater potential water quality risk for the homeowner.

States and utilities that have taken steps to encourage lead service line replacement programs have taken different approaches to funding and cost recovery. These include folding the total program costs into customer water rates, adopting special fees or charges, seeking state or federal grants, or offering to reimburse the customer for a portion of the cost of their project.

The bill before you proposes to allow a private water company to develop and submit a lead service line replacement plan to the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) and for PURA to authorize cost recovery mechanisms for the replacement of those customer lead service lines.

The bill is permissive in nature, and envisions that the approval of rates to fund the customer lead service line replacements would be determined based on company-specific plans and situations. The rate mechanisms that PURA would authorize would likely vary depending on the number of customer lead service lines in a water system, the nature of the service area, the current customer rates, and other factors.

The bill will give PURA and the Office of Consumer Counsel the ability to review and either approve or reject the plan for a particular utility based on the specific information and the customer benefits and rate implications.

We appreciate your interest in this and urge your support of Section 1 of HB5489. It provides a way for Connecticut to be a leader in providing programs for lead service line replacements and address this important public health issue with a reasonable, measured approach.