



**Testimony
Michael Criss
First Selectman, Town of Harwinton
Before the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee
April 29, 2019**

My name is Michael Criss, and I am the First Selectman of the Town of Harwinton.

I am here on behalf of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) to testify in **opposition** to **SB-1139, AN ACT ELIMINATING PROPERTY TAX ON CERTAIN MOTOR VEHICLES AND ADJUSTING THE UNIFORM PROPERTY ASSESSMENT RATE.**

The motor vehicle property tax accounts for more than \$850 million in local revenues statewide. SB-1139 calls for the elimination of the property tax on motor vehicles, except rental cars, and an increase in the uniform assessment rate to 100% to offset this revenue loss.

Shifting more than \$850 million onto the backs of homeowners will overwhelm property taxpayers and devastate housing values throughout the state. Eliminating this tax and increasing the uniform assessment rate, will shift hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional property taxes onto homeowners and businesses.

As First Selectman of Harwinton, I have been working very hard to improve the efficiency of our local government and be more responsive to our residents and businesses. Unfortunately, like many towns, we are struggling to find ways to reduce municipal costs to address concerns with declining revenues and flat funding of state aid to municipalities.

Municipal leaders from Connecticut's smaller communities are very concerned that residents are at a tipping point. Homeowners in our communities are frustrated about rising property tax levels. Changes in federal law which capped the amount of state and local taxes residents can deduct from their income taxes have shined a spotlight on Connecticut's property tax burdens.

Unfortunately, SB-1139 will make things worse by increasing the cost of homeownership and diminishing housing values. Not only will this impose a greater burden on already overburdened homeowners, it will undermine Connecticut's economy.

On behalf of COST, I urge lawmakers to oppose the bill.

Founded in 1975, COST is the state's only organization dedicated exclusively to advocating on behalf of the interests of Connecticut's smaller towns.