



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
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Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Housing Committee
February 18, 2020**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) appreciates the opportunity to comment on **HB-5121, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN PROTECTIONS FOR GROUP AND FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES**, which raises several questions and concerns. As such, COST is opposing the bill at this time.

As drafted, HB-5121 makes numerous changes to the statutes concerning the regulation of family and group child care homes, including extending the restrictions on a municipality's authority to regulate or impose operational conditions on family child care homes to group child care homes.

Line 122 of HB-5121 prohibits zoning regulations from requiring a special zoning permit or exception to operate either a family or group child care home in a residential zone. Under existing law, a "group child care home" is authorized to provide a program of supplementary care (A) to not less than seven or more than twelve related or unrelated children on a regular basis, or (B) that meets the definition of a family child care home except that it operates in a facility other than a private family home.

COST appreciates the need to expand access to licensed child care opportunities to meet the needs of our residents. However, zoning laws are designed to promote and protect the health and safety of all residents. We are concerned, therefore, with the proposed prohibition on a municipality's ability to regulate or impose operational conditions or require special zoning permits or exceptions regarding family or group child care homes, which may involve multiple vehicles providing drop-offs, pick-ups as well as staff.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the specific issues that family and group child care homes have encountered relative to a municipality's existing zoning laws to determine whether this change is warranted or whether it would undermine a municipality's obligation to protect the safety and welfare of its residents, including the children receiving care at group child care homes.

COST is also concerned with provisions in Section 1 (b) of the bill which require municipalities to submit a sworn statement to OPM each year certifying that the municipality is in compliance with the requirements of this provision or providing a "specific timeframe" as to when the



zoning ordinance will be in compliance. If the provisions of the bill are adopted, municipalities are required to comply with the law and individuals will have recourse under the law to enforce the provisions. Requiring a sworn statement to be submitted to OPM each year is an unnecessary overreach that undermines the state/local partnership.

The bill also reorganizes the zoning statutes to provide greater clarity. COST does not oppose these provisions.

COST stands ready to work with the proponents of the bill to address these concerns.

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