H.B. 5186 – AN ACT CONCERNING SAFE DRINKING WATER

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Somers, Representative Petit and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Fred Johnson with GEI Consultants in Glastonbury. I am an engineer and geologist who has worked in the field of environmental remediation, water resources and flood control for over 40 years in Connecticut. My clients and I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the committee to discuss this bill. Although we take no strong position on the content of the bill before you, we respectfully request that the bill be amended in order to bring pertinent statutes in line with contemporary environmental quality and technical understanding.

My clients are the owners of a property in Rocky Hill on the banks of the Connecticut River. This property has a unique feature of a high capacity “Ranney” well that was installed in the mid 1940’s. This well is capable of drawing large quantities of fresh drinking water from underneath the Connecticut River. My client has evaluated this well for high capacity water supply. So far the results of the evaluation are positive and demonstrate a strong potential for this well to be rehabilitated as a water supply. However, through review of the current regulations and discussions with the DPH, we understand that the current regulatory framework does not allow water supply along the Connecticut River nor does DPH have the flexibility to conduct an engineering evaluation of a non-traditional Ranney well.

We ask for the opportunity to draft amendments to existing statutes that would allow a potential water supply asset like the Ranney well in Rocky Hill to be evaluated on its technical and economic merits. Specifically we would suggest changes to CGS 22a-417 to open the Conn. River watershed for potential water supply development. When drafted the Conn. River had worse environmental quality and lesser controls over discharges. Through some effective environmental laws the Conn River is a far better and cleaner basin. Also we would propose amendments to the Public health code to allow flexibility regarding separation distances for non-traditional wells like a Ranney well. Without such changes the regulators have no basis to evaluate let alone opine on such a unique resource.

We thank you for your attention and look forward to the opportunity to provide amendments to our regulatory framework to align with 21st century environmental quality and technology.