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Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the
Government Administration & Elections Committee
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment in **opposition** to **HB-5011 - AN ACT DECREASING FEES FOR COPYING PUBLIC RECORDS UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.**

Although well-intentioned, HB-5011 will result in a significant revenue loss for municipalities by decreasing the fee that towns can collect for copying records from 50 cents to 15 cents and reducing the amount for scanning documents.

Given the pressure on local budgets and property tax levels, COST opposes any bill that will result in a loss of revenue to our towns. Towns currently retain a small fraction of the revenues generated for maintaining and recording various records even though they spend considerable time and resources performing these functions.

It is my understanding that the rationale for reducing the fee is because Staples and other office supply companies typically charge approximately 15 cents per copy. However, this is not an appropriate comparison. Companies such as Staples can perform copying for much less because they are in a position to purchase paper, toner, ink, etc. at cost. Typically, their self-serve copy centers are not staffed and the employees performing other print requests are not paid the same amount as municipal employees, whose salaries and benefits are collectively bargained.

Moreover, for office supply companies such as Staples copying is generally a loss leader - a way to get you in the door to upsell you on other items, such as laptops, computers and other devices. Again, comparing the amount that office supply and printing companies charge per copy to determine how much a municipality can charge is not a fair comparison.

The cost of providing copies to the public also reflects the cost associated with ensuring that a municipal employee is available to monitor access to the records. Towns must protect the integrity of municipal records and ensure that they are not, unintentionally or otherwise adulterated, misplaced or misused. Some records must be reviewed to determine whether any of the information is protected from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, such as the location of critical infrastructure, which may involve considerable time.

In addition, COST opposes the provisions in the bill which limit the amount that municipalities may charge for making records available for scanning. This bill will cost towns thousands and



thousands of dollars in revenue and towns will still have to provide personnel to monitor the scanning to protect the integrity of the records.

COST urges you to oppose the bill, which will shift a greater burden onto property taxpayers at a time when municipalities are facing considerable budget challenges.

Thank you for your consideration.

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