

# Planning and Development Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6104

AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL PLANNING AND COUNCILS OF

**Title:** GOVERNMENTS.

**Vote Date:** 3/2/2021

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/3/2021

**File No.:** 68

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Planning and Development Committee  
Co-Sponsor: Rep. Jason Rojas, 9<sup>th</sup> Dist.

**JFS Language, NCO 4295:** This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1, July 1, 2021 4-66k

Section 2, July 1, 2021 4-66r

Section 3, July 1, 2021 4-124s(b) to (e)

Section 4, July 1, 2021 4-124n

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To implement modifications to the administration of the regional planning incentive account and related programs and revise the bylaws requirements for officers and conduct regional councils of governments.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None Expressed

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Betsy Gara, Connecticut Council of Small Towns:** This bill will go along way toward positioning the COGs to continue to provide critical services to the municipalities and regions they serve. COGs need to be able to rely on stable funding mechanisms to ensure sufficient staff and resources to provide member towns with a rich array of critical services,

ranging from purchasing consortiums, affordable housing planning and assessments, transit-oriented development and other economic development strategies, GIS mapping, stormwater management, animal control, regional revaluation, engineering, pandemic response and the list goes on and on.

**John Filchak, Executive Director, Northeastern Connecticut Council of**

**Governments (NECCOG)**: This legislation is important to NECCOG and the other COGs because we need the stability in funding provided originally intended through the Regional Planning Incentive Account (RPIA). The changes put forth in 6104 will, we believe, stabilize funding for COGs allowing us a predictable base of funds by which to provide services to our member towns. The legislation would also correct many of the procedural challenges of the Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) (please refer to CT COG's testimony for details) that will better foster new shared and regional innovations to the benefit of our towns and Connecticut.

**David B. Erwin, Coordinator for the RESC Alliance**: The RESCs have been in existence for over 50 years and serve as support to the local and regional Boards of Education in their various geographic regions. They assist with programming as related to a variety of areas. Several of the RESCs offer specialized programs for students in need of highly specialized services for students with disabilities. RESCs work with early childhood programs and several operate magnet school programs. The RESCs work with the State Department of Special Education to assist in statewide training of the various service providers and have been working closely with the State on the rollout of the new IEP process. The goal is to provide high quality programs at a lower cost as they can serve a variety of districts.

**Samuel S. Gold, AIPC CT COG Chair and River COG Executive Director**: 6104 makes needed revisions and corrections to key statutes governing councils of governments. Section One (lines 1-14, inclusive) of the bill clarifies that monies generated from the Regional Planning Incentive Account (RPIA) are to be used first to fund the Regional Performance Incentive Account (RPIA) are to be used first to fund the COGs basic State aid the Regional Services Grant (RSG) and secondarily to fund the Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP).

Section One (lines 25 2<sup>nd</sup> 26 corrects an issue whereby regions that voluntarily consolidated on or before December 31, 2013 received an additional \$125,000 grant from the Regional Planning Incentive Account. This was interpreted to be an ongoing payment and this section corrects this interpretation by placing each COG on the same base funding level beginning with fiscal year 2022.

Section One, subsection (d) (lines 38-57) sets a base figure for monetary support for the CODs from the Regional Planning Incentive Account at \$4.1 million, level funding from FY2021, with a new formula for its distribution to the COGs in the amount of \$185,000 plus \$0.68 per capita for each COG.

Section Two contains minor technical corrections to place the Regional Service Grant to the COGs in line with the funding distribution established in Section One.

Section Three (lines 118-126), inclusive) by simplifying the present language to limit its use to the "joint provision of any government service, or a planning study regarding the

joint provision of any service on a regional basis". This section corrects cumbersome requirements to move forward with new initiatives including the removal of the current requirement to have each participating municipal legislative body endorse any proposal and replacing it with a resolution by the COG's governing body. This subsection (lines 153-157) also enables the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) to recommend to the Secretary of OPM focus areas for RPIP investment. Subsection (2) of this section eliminates the current priority given to applications with all members participating in the request

Section Four: (lines 201-219) are technical in nature related to the operational structure of the COGs.

Due to lack of revenue generation for the COGs, the RPIA funding provided to COGs is what allows the regions to continue providing critical services and assistance to the member municipalities. Councils of Governments need reliable base funding as well as access to funds through the RPIP process to develop and implement regional programs and services to provide efficiencies and reduce costs for our members. This legislation provides the reliable funding necessary to continue assisting our member municipalities.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed

**Reported by: Maureen O'Reilly**

**Date: March 11, 2021**