Dear General Assembly,

My name is David Scher, and I am writing in favor of HB 6647: An Act Concerning Geographic Information Systems. I have been the GIS Manager for the City of Torrington for the past 15 years. I have seen Geographic Information Systems become a centralized hub in the City, from which most all departments and the public can get their daily needs serviced, fully and partially, through maps and data, and linked services that use GIS data.

I once made a poster for GIS Day that hung in the legislative building in Hartford that showed GIS in Torrington as an octopus, where GIS was the head, and the eight arms were applications, services and data that were provided to the public and City Departments. The cartoon analog worked well. But that was about 10 years ago; now GIS has so many arms that they don’t fit on an octopus. EVERY City Department uses GIS in some capacity EVERY day. This is true for municipalities, and it is true for the State of Connecticut – where GIS is becoming a way -- maybe the best way -- to centralize services that use maps, data, and locations for public and agency use. It is also true for many businesses, utility companies, universities and colleges, and not-for-profit organizations. Most everyone now uses GIS-based applications and data many times during their workday.

A result of this incredible growth in the use of GIS as the core or centralized hub of governmental services is the need for coordination and guidance that reduces the cost of GIS in Connecticut by eliminating redundant efforts of data creation and maintenance among the varying levels of government, and that provides GIS users with consistent data and programmatic support.

We need:
1) an oversite body, a leader and staffing at a state level agency that can guide all of us GIS professionals in a coordinated way, to best accomplish the tasks, projects, and programs we create and manage for the good of Connecticut’s citizens and for our State’s economic and environmental health,
2) we need a specific set of GIS standards and long-term data development and procurement programs for core GIS data like parcels, address points, rights-of-way, districts and easements, zoning, elevation and topography, aerial photography, flood data etc...
3) we need a GIS data and applications clearinghouse that provides the place to get record GIS datasets, obtain data standards, and access GIS applications.
4) we need training and education that is designed to address the Geographic Information System specific tasks, projects, and programs that will be developed in the state henceforth.

Thank You,

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