

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: Senate Bill 12

AN ACT AUTHORIZING AND ADJUSTING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT MATCHING FUNDS AND EXTENDING THE TIME PERIOD FOR

Title: DISTRIBUTING GRANTS FOR CERTAIN LAW ENFORCEMENT EQUIPMENT.

Vote Date: 4/6/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/30/2022

File No.: File 609

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Governor Ned Lamont, Pursuant to Joint Rule 9

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill changes bond authorizations in Fiscal Year (FY) 23 and extends the deadline for certain law enforcement equipment grants.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Jeffrey Beckham, Acting Secretary, Office of Policy Management](#) testified in support of the bill stating, "this bill would include \$165.0 million in new General Obligation bond authorizations for FY 2023 in addition to the previously enacted \$1.9 billion. These authorizations would include:

1. \$75.0 million to provide the state match towards projects allowed under the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This will serve as the initial first year match towards an estimated \$6.0 billion of Federal infrastructure funds available to the State of Connecticut. These funds will be used for a variety of purposes, including, but not limited to, water infrastructure improvements, electric vehicle charging improvements, and resilient infrastructure.
2. \$60.0 million to the Department of Corrections for improvements to the state's prisons and to address deferred maintenance projects.
3. \$15.0 million to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for infrastructure improvements at state parks. Current authorizations are inadequate to maintain current infrastructure projects.
4. \$15.0 million to the Capital Equipment Purchase Fund to help address State information technology (IT) equipment needs.

This bill also extends the Police Body Camera grant program for an additional year. Currently the program will end on June 30, 2022. The change will extend the reimbursement program through FY 2023."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[John Elsesser, Town Manager, Town of Coventry](#) supported the provisions authorizing funding for the required state match under the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), but asked for funds to reinvigorate the state's bond funded Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP).

[Laura Francis, First Selectman, Town of Durham and President, Connecticut Council of Small Towns \(COST\)](#) supported the extension of the deadline for certain law enforcement equipment grants, supported funding a state match program required by the federal IIJA and requested funds to reinvigorate the state's bond funded STEAP Grants.

[Lisa Thomas, Chairwoman, Coventry Town Council](#) requested funds to reinvigorate the state's bond funded STEAP Grants.

[Tanya Bourgoin, President, Friends of Machimoodus and Sunrise State Parks](#) supported increasing bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure as outlined in Section 11 of the bill. "We are all well aware that [the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection] DEEP has a backlog of nearly \$130 million in critical maintenance, repairs, and other much needed infrastructure improvement projects at State Parks. Some investments are necessary to renovate historic structures, but significant investments are also required to ensure facilities are more accessible to all, especially to those with mobility challenges...Our group urges Committee members to consider the long-standing need for capital investments in Connecticut's State Parks, especially now that so many of our residents and visitors are seeking more outdoor recreational opportunities."

[Cliff Carter, Friends of Fort Trumbull State Parks](#) supported increasing bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure as outlined in Section 11 of the bill. He stated, "I am advised by the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) that here are approximately 1,000 buildings at 110 Connecticut State Parks that accommodate visitors. One of those parks is Fort Trumbull State Park in New London, Connecticut, which draws both local visitors and out of state tourists, indeed international tourists who spend time and money in Connecticut to view historical artifacts."

[Randy Collins, Advocacy Manager, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities \(CCM\)](#) supported Sections 1 and 9 of the bill, which provides a state match for eligible projects under the Federal IIJA and offsets the costs to purchase police body cameras, dashboard cameras and related data storage for distressed municipalities. "CCM asks the committee to support these measures that will provide needed financial assistance to our towns, cities and our shared residents."

[Elizabeth Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Water Works Association](#) supported funding a state match program required by the federal IIJA. Under the first annual allotment under IIJA,

Connecticut will receive \$53,770,000 in water infrastructure funding, which will be distributed to eligible water companies through the state's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

[Sam Gold, Executive Director, Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments](#) supported Section 9 of the bill, which provides bond authorizations for the acquisition, management and storage of police dash and body camera footage and equipment. He explained that, "our municipalities need assistance with the costly acquisition, management and storage of police dash and body cam footage and equipment. Storage of these digital recordings costs our municipalities thousands of dollars each year and we are still awaiting an affordable statewide solution. Until a statewide option is secured, we request that the state continue to offer options that help pay the high costs of these unfunded mandates. The language outlined in Sec. 9 would extend grant opportunities to recuperate costs and would be welcomed by all member communities. We encourage the passage of this section which would help free up revenue to be spent on other town services and improvements."

Mr. Gold noted that Sections 10 and 11 of this bill increased bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure. "The parks, open spaces and recreational facilities located in the Lower Connecticut River Valley are considered some of our region's most valuable resources. Improvements to these facilities would be welcomed by new and current visitors, particularly any alterations that can further facilitate their enjoyment regardless of mobility status. Increasing funding to support renovations and improvements, specifically those designed to improve compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act is applauded."

[Ellen Grant, President, Friends of Connecticut State Parks](#) supported increasing bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure as outlined in Section 11 of the bill. She stated, "a constant during these last thirty years has been the inadequacy of the capital investment funds allocated by the State to repair, replace or modernize the aging infrastructure present in almost every Park and Forest. The System's buildings, whether they be irreplaceable historic structures or bathrooms essential to properly service Connecticut family visitors, are universally in need of major restoration and upgrades. Parks' roadways, underground pipe networks, electrical systems, telecommunications connections, boat launches, pavilions and campgrounds must meet 21st century standards for safety and utility."

[Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association](#) supported this bill's increased bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure as outlined in Section 11 of the bill. He cited that, "people have been getting outdoors in record numbers in Connecticut, and according to DEEP, approximately 13 million people visited State Parks in 2021. Attendance has been growing by approximately 10-20% each year since the Passport to the Parks took effect in 2018 and has essentially doubled since the mid-1980's. This increase in outdoor recreation provides significant economic, health, wildlife, and other benefits to our state."

[Julie Hulten, President, Sleeping Giant Park Association](#) supported increasing bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure. She noted that, "according to the most recent national Bureau of Economic Analysis report, outdoor recreation in Connecticut generated \$3.3 billion in revenue and helped sustain 41,721 jobs in 2020."

[Christine Koster, Resident, Naugatuck, Connecticut](#) supported increasing bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure. She, "encouraged committee members to consider the need for

capital investments in Connecticut's State Parks as you would think about the need to invest in your own home over time. It would be unthinkable to go for 90 years in your home without some upgrade in your heating and cooling systems, or without roof or siding repairs, or without providing for wi-fi connectivity or other evolving technological needs, and much more. You know that if you let your home simply degrade rather than periodically make improvements, its value would also degrade over time."

[Theodore Lynn, Ph.D, President, West Rock Ridge Park Association](#) supported increasing bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure as outlined in Section 11 of the bill. "Over the past few years, with funding for infrastructure effectively zeroed out, many parks have suffered due to crumbling infrastructure in the face of increased usage. Many Parks have also seen 10-20% increases in attendance year over year even before the pandemic. The increase in wear and tear has been felt at West Rock Ridge State Park as well, with parking lots overflowing onto the streets nearly every nice day. Our park has suffered from a lack of funding for a number of years, resulting in crumbling access roads and retaining walls, the failure of which would limit access to historic landmarks, scenic overlooks, as well as bike paths and hiking trails. As pointed out more eloquently than I, funding for infrastructure must be made available to maintain the nearly 1,000 park buildings in our 110 State Parks. These parks are a revenue generating asset of the State, but without proper maintenance, they will lose their value to attract visitors and residents to Connecticut."

[Irene Skrybailo, Resident, New Milford, Connecticut](#) supported increasing bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure. "State Parks are so important to the population, open spaces helped people stay sane and healthy during COVID. I personally have witnessed an increase in foot traffic in parks, which is TERRIFIC. State parks work and keep Nutmeggers healthy."

[Susan Whalen, Board Member, Friends of Connecticut State Parks](#) supported increasing bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure. She stated, "as the Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Conservation at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) from 2008 to 2019, I can fully attest to the urgent need for additional investment in the state's system of forests, parks, historic structures, and trails."

[Lynn Wilkinson, President, Friends of Gillette Castle State Park](#) supported increasing bonding investment for State Parks infrastructure. She explained that, "at Gillette Castle State Park, currently critical needs are window restoration (neglected for over 20 years), improvements in accessibility, and vital improvements in drainage along eroding roadways – during a significant storm in 2021 we had significant trail erosion that washed out onto the public "Ferry Road." The immensely popular train trail hike has an important trestle that has been in disrepair and closed for many years....This historic structure is at risk of collapse and requires urgent attention before it is lost."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Brie J. Wolf

Date: 4/18/22