



*Creating Great Communities For All*

# Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association

March 2, 2022

Testimony regarding  
**H.B. 5269 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING REMOTE MEETINGS UNDER THE  
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.**

CCAPA supports this Raised Bill, which would eliminate the current expiration date of Section 149 of Public Act 21-2, which last session allowed for flexibility of public meetings to be held in person or virtually, but which was set to sunset on April 30, 2022. In effect, the Raised Bill would make permanent the ability of public agencies to decide whether to hold meetings in person (as was traditional pre-COVID) or via videoconference. These provisions allow for individual members of a board or commission to require accommodation to participate in a meeting virtually (even if the meeting is otherwise in person) or members of the public to request an in-person accommodation for an otherwise virtual meeting. Overall, these provisions move municipalities to be prepared for a hybrid meeting environment going forward.

As we testified last year on the topic of virtual meetings, allowing municipalities this flexibility, and particularly the ability to hold meetings electronically, has been an unanticipated benefit of our COVID adaptations. Our membership has found nearly universal increases in public engagement and participation in virtual public meetings (as compared to in-person meetings) because of the ability to participate from home or work and still manage elements like child care that were frequently a barrier to civic participation. Allowing for virtual meetings as an option, not a mandate, on a permanent basis, is a welcome proposal.

The one note we would add to this support is that while most municipalities have gotten used to entirely-virtual meetings, many communities are still struggling with the technology and logistics of hybrid meetings. Ensuring that both in-person and virtual participants have access to the same information and experience is a challenge. We would request that resources be made available, perhaps through OPM, ACIR, and municipal groups such as CCM and COST, to help communities identify best practices for hybrid meetings as well as the funding to equip their public meeting spaces to accommodate them.

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## **WHO WE ARE**

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association (CCAPA) has over 420 members who are governmental and consulting planners, land use attorneys, citizen planners, and other professionals engaged in planning and managing land use, economic development, housing, transportation, and conservation for local, regional, and State governments, private businesses and other entities. CCAPA has long been committed to assisting the legislature and State agencies with developing and furthering

responsible growth management principles. The APA is an independent, not-for-profit, national educational organization that provides leadership in the development of vital communities.

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## CONTACTS

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