The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut’s statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 168 towns and cities.

HB 5884 An Act Concerning Municipal Fire Districts and Municipal Electric Utilities.

HB 5353 An Act Concerning Certain Municipal Traffic Authorities.

CCM thanks the proponents for offering the aforementioned proposals as an opportunity to caution against the balkanization of local government.

The balkanization of local government has become increasingly popular as a supposed tool for better management of public resources. Balkanization is the term used to refer to the breaking up of a larger unified entity into smaller, more manageable portions. It is related to decentralization, which typically implies the transfer of policy responsibility from central government to other less centralized bodies such as those proposed by HB 5884 and HB 5353. The idea of balkanization appeals to many people because it is seen as a way to promote a more efficient and equitable use of public resources.

However, as it relates to the aforementioned proposals, CCM would caution that balkanization of local government can be detrimental to long-term policy planning and coordination. When local governments are divided into smaller, segmented entities, the quality of service provision can be impaired. As a result, the public may not receive the services that are necessary to promote a healthy and prosperous quality of life. Without unified control, some areas may receive less attention than others.

Furthermore, balkanization of local government can lead to inefficient spending, as each individual sub-governmental unit is more likely to over-spend its allocated budget in order to prove its relevance and capability. This issue can cause a significant drain on resources which would otherwise be used more effectively elsewhere. In addition, balkanization can also lead to duplication of efforts, further squandering of resources.

Finally, the balkanization of local government can prevent strategic planning, as the multiple sub-governments may not understand the bigger picture. This can lead to short-term solutions being implemented, which may be detrimental to long-term planning.

CCM would encourage the committee to oppose HB 5884 and HB 5353.

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