



**For the Planning and Development Committee  
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director  
February 17, 2023**

*Rivers Alliance was formed to fight for sound water policies at the state and federal levels, to provide education on water resources, and to advocate for any person or group striving to protect water. If you want clean, free-flowing and healthy rivers, and high-quality drinking water, Rivers Alliance is here to help.*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the following raised bill before you today.

**SB 966 AAC THE METROPOLITAIN DISTRICT OF HARTFORD COUNTY –  
SUPPORT**

I would like to sincerely thank the committee for raising this bill and providing an opportunity for the public to voice their concerns about the transparency and business practices of the MDC.

Rivers Alliance is strongly in favor of:

- An annual audit by the Auditors of Public Accounts.
- The establishment of a task force to examine the MDC's organization and operations. **The Independent Consumer Advocate as Chair of the task force, Consumer Counsel, and Public Utilities Regulatory Authority representation are critical representatives** that we would like to see on the task force if this bill were to move forward. However, we think this task force can only be effective and objective if **current and former commissioners are not eligible to serve on said task force.**
- Model code of ethics requirement.
- Permit Commissioners from non-member towns.

I am environmental advocate but I am also an MDC customer residing in Newington. I serve as Co-chair of the Water Planning Council Advisory Group where I work with a broad group of stakeholders (including many water utilities.) I also served on the Policy Subcommittee during the development of Connecticut's first State Water Plan. I have spent many years examining water policy, statutes and decision making while working with water utilities and other stakeholders with the goal in mind of ensuring that we have water for fish and faucet for future generations.

In the face of climate change, protecting and properly managing our water resources has never been more important. Water and Wastewater utilities have a dual responsibility to meet customer needs for a reasonable cost while meeting regulatory requirements to protect public health and the environment. It's a heavy burden and most utilities work engage extensively with stakeholders and regulators to help ease that burden and to have optimal outcomes.

There are many things the MDC does extremely well. We have very high quality drinking water that is delivered reliably to my tap and there is much work being done to fix and maintain my sewer system and reduce combined sewer overflows. It's a daunting task. Many of MDC's properties are valuable recreation areas maintained for our enjoyment as per their charter. I've had the pleasure to work with some very fine employees of the MDC on various issues.

It's a shame that this good work is too often undermined by poor decisions and a lack of transparency that generate significant public outcry and distrust. Which is why this proposal is before you today.

The MDC was created by the General Assembly generations ago. I believe that a close examination of the organization and operation of the MDC directed by the General Assembly is long overdue.

Ultimately, it would be beneficial to have the MDC regulated by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority. This would provide an opportunity for a third party with expertise in water rates and revenue requirements to authorize rate schemes and adjustments. In addition, it would provide greater transparency as the documents and reports submitted to PURA are available to the public on PURA's website.

Thank you again for raising this issue. I'm available to provide further perspective and answer any questions.