



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Intergovernmental Policy and Planning Division

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Testimony of Martin L. Heft, Undersecretary
Office of Policy and Management

HB 6890 AN ACT CONCERNING QUALIFYING TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES

Chairs Rahman and Kavros DeGraw, Vice Chairs Needleman and Chafee, Ranking Members Fazio and Zullo, and honorable members of the Planning and Development Committee:

The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) has concerns with HB 6890 as written and provides some additional context for clarification and consideration.

It appears the intent of the bill is to direct discretionary funding for new infrastructure towards the creation of more dense and affordable housing in neighborhoods with transit. However, including "transit adjacent" communities and communities with "regular bus service," which requires only five days a week of fixed route service rather than a certain level of frequency, as eligible for the program means that almost all Connecticut municipalities would be eligible to qualify.

The wide reach of the proposed program is concerning because 1) it could be difficult to administer, especially considering the level of coordination that would be required with other funding agencies; 2) it could disperse state infrastructure investments to an extent that would not meaningfully support high quality transit, and 3) could result in conflicts with the CT Conservation and Development Policies Plan 2018-2023 (C&D Plan). The first principle of the C&D Plan is to redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas with existing or currently planned physical infrastructure and includes several policies that focus on infill and redevelopment and capitalizing on existing infrastructure.

Subsection 12 of Section 1 defines discretionary infrastructure funding to include "expansion" of transportation, sewer and water services. This should be better defined, as the delineation between "maintenance" projects that enable future development and "expansion" projects may not always be clear.

Significant discretion is given to the Responsible Growth Coordinator. While Section 2 requires the Office of Responsible Growth (ORG) to develop guidelines for this

proposed program, agency regulations, which are developed through a transparent and inclusive process may be more appropriate.

We support codifying ORG, originally established under Governor Rell's 2006 Executive Order 15. The bill's language only outlines what ORG currently does, plus two new duties relating to additions in this proposed legislation without making connections between those duties and leaving little room for evolution and/or enhancement of the program.

We would suggest creating broader buckets of responsibilities that enable more flexibility to increase, add or subtract responsibilities as appropriate over time. Rather than the list of responsibilities as outlined, we would suggest the following:

- Collect, analyze and disseminate information to assist in the ongoing development of responsible growth goals for the Governor, Continuing Committee on State Planning and Development, state and regional agencies, local governments and the public
- Coordinate the development of state agency policy, planning and programming to improve outcomes and make efficient use of state resources and expertise through the development and implementation of the state plan of conservation and development pursuant to Chapters 297 and 297a of these statutes; the administration of the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act, as set forth in sections 22a-1 through 22a-1h; and the facilitation of interagency coordination in matters involving land and water resources and infrastructure improvements, among other activities
- Facilitate coordination between the state, planning regions and municipalities on matters of development and conservation by serving as a state liaison to regional councils of governments; providing staff support to relevant groups such as the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations and the State Water Planning Council; and administering grant programs such as the Regional Performance Incentive program, Qualifying Transit-Oriented Communities program, and Responsible Growth Transit Oriented Development program, among other activities
- Other duties as deemed appropriate by the Secretary to address current and emerging development and conservation issues.

In addition, it is unclear why ORG would need to develop state agency regulations to carry out its routine duties. It is particularly difficult to conceive of how to develop such regulations for many of the duties assigned to the Office involve serving as a facilitator and coordinator between agencies and levels of government or administering grant programs that are guided by their own legislation. Other newly

created divisions within OPM were not required to adopt agency regulations for their routine responsibilities, see for example the Geographic Information Office created through Public Act 21-2, Section 78, or the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Divisions created through Public Act 05-249.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.