



**For the Planning and Development Committee  
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director  
February 3, 2024**

*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.

**HB 6995 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE CHARTER OF THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF HARTFORD COUNTY – Opposes**

I am both an environmental advocate and an MDC customer residing in Newington. I serve as Co-chair of the Water Planning Council Advisory Group, working with a broad range of stakeholders, including many water utilities. I also served on the Policy Subcommittee during the development of Connecticut's first State Water Plan. My work has long focused on ensuring a sustainable balance—that we have water for fish and faucet for future generations.

The MDC provides high-quality drinking water, maintains sewer systems to reduce combined sewer overflows, and preserves valuable recreation areas. MDC also manages the largest available surface water supply in Connecticut with one of the most cost-effective filtration and purification systems. I appreciate the dedicated employees I've worked with on various issues.

I support the intent of this bill because municipalities in need could benefit from MDC's surplus water supply. Additionally, towns already served by MDC would gain a voice as member communities. **However, I have serious concerns regarding MDC's history of poor decision-making, lack of transparency, and resistance to efforts by the General Assembly to address these issues. This has generated significant distrust from the public, customers and stakeholders.**

## Transparency Concerns

A prime example is MDC's decision to offer a discounted rate to Niagara Bottling Company. This rate was framed as an "economic development rate" but was, in reality, a declining block rate—one of the most regressive structures, incentivizing high water use and contradicting conservation principles. MDC claimed the discount would significantly increase revenue, ultimately lowering rates for residential customers. However, the MDC Independent Consumer Council testified that available evidence suggested otherwise—that the rate change would reduce revenue and shift costs onto other customers. Despite overwhelming public opposition and expert analysis against this scheme, the majority of MDC commissioners approved it and the predictions of the ICC came to fruition.

Similarly, the 2018 update to MDC's Combined Sewer Overflow Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) illustrates a concerning pattern. MDC assured town councils and the public that its submission to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) complied with its Consent Order. In reality, the plan proposed extending project completion to 2058—far beyond the 2029 deadline set by DEEP. This directly contradicted DEEP's explicit warning in 2017 that such an extension should *not* be included in the LTCP update.

## A Need for Greater Oversight

To restore public confidence, MDC must be held to higher standards of transparency and accountability. In order to do so, please consider the following:

- Make this change to their charter contingent upon submitting to greater oversight similar to previous legislative proposals in 2021 ([SB 966](#)), 2023 ([SB1139](#)), and ([HB5394](#).)
- Bring the MDC under the oversight of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). This would provide expert, third-party review of rate structures, ensuring financial decisions are sound and equitable. It would also enhance transparency, as reports submitted to PURA are publicly accessible.

## Conclusion

While there are clear benefits to incorporating non-contiguous towns into MDC's service area, any expansion must be accompanied by greater transparency and accountability. Without meaningful reforms, Rivers Alliance cannot support this bill in its current form.

Thank you for raising this important issue. I am available for further discussion and to answer any questions.