



Testimony
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Before the Government Administration & Elections Committee
March 4, 2024

- **RE: SB-255 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADOPTION OF MUNICIPAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST PROVISIONS.**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) appreciates the opportunity to testify in **opposition** to SB-255.

The vast majority of municipalities have adopted a municipal code of ethics to prohibit activities that may create the appearance of impropriety in participating in meetings, making decisions, or acting on municipal issues. Such codes of ethics, by their very nature, include conflict of interest provisions.

Recognizing the value of ensuring that municipal officials understand the importance of adhering to a code of ethics and avoiding conflicts of interest, COST recently held a workshop for newly elected municipal officials which included a presentation on these issues.

It is unclear why legislation is necessary to mandate the adoption of conflict of interest provisions given that municipalities have incorporated such provisions in their municipal codes of ethics. And, although we appreciate that a model conflict of interest provisions would be useful to share with municipalities to guide them in updating their codes of ethics, if needed, it is unclear why it is necessary to codify this language in statute.

Moreover, the definition of conflict of interest in the model is limited to instances where an official, officer, or employee may “derive a direct monetary gain or suffer a direct monetary loss”. However, conflict of interest provisions included in municipal codes of ethics are broader and, in addition to financial considerations, prohibit individuals from acting where there may be a personal interest, such as a matter involving a close relative, or where there is a personal bias or predilection that prevents the individual from being objective.

COST also opposes provisions in the bill requiring municipalities to submit a copy of their conflict of interest provisions to the state Ethics Commission. Inasmuch as the state Ethics Commission does not have jurisdiction over municipal ethics, this requirement is overreaching. Given the breadth of information that municipalities are required to submit to various state agencies, these types of requirements are imposing an increasing burden on municipalities, often with little or no added benefit.

Given these concerns, COST opposes the bill.