



**Testimony  
Betsy Gara  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the Environment Committee  
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) regarding **HB-5004, AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CERTAIN CLIMATE CHANGE MEASURES.**

Rising sea levels, projected changes in precipitation and more extreme weather events are presenting significant challenges in towns throughout Connecticut. In addition, towns situated along the coast and inland waterways are witnessing an increase in the frequency of flooding and the depth of coastal inundation. These are issues that may compromise water systems, septic systems, and other infrastructure and pose problems for homeowners and businesses situated in flood prone areas.

Recognizing these concerns, towns are undertaking a variety of measures to improve resiliency, including incorporating resiliency into planning and conservation efforts, adopting updated flood ordinances, utilizing low impact development, raising road levels, developing coastal-resiliency plans, and exploring and implementing other options to build resiliency and adaptation.

#### **Renewable Energy in School Buildings**

COST supports the intent of Section 15 of the bill which provides additional percentage points for school building projects that include the installation of a renewable energy or energy efficiency project. Municipalities and school districts have embraced efforts to utilize renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in their building facilities to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and reduce their carbon footprint.

COST recommends that this language incorporate provisions from Governor Lamont's bill, HB-5052, which facilitate the ability of school districts to incorporate solar PV systems into building facilities by aligning school building project funding with existing energy efficiency programs. This will ensure that the funding a school district receives from existing renewable energy/energy efficiency programs will not be deducted from any school construction reimbursement funds.

#### **Plans of Conservation & Development**

SB-18 requires municipalities to evaluate for environmental sustainability and climate resiliency in their local Plans of Conservation and Development (POCD). Most towns are already



incorporating climate resiliency and sustainability measures into POCDs. In addition, coastal management issues have long been required to be included in POCDs. We appreciate that the language of the bill provides municipalities with flexibility to incorporate environmental sustainability and climate resiliency as they update their POCDs. This will allow municipalities to build on elements of their POCD that already address sustainability and resiliency. As drafted, however, this provision applies to POCDs that must be updated on or after July 1, 2024. For those towns that have not yet incorporated these elements in their plans, this does not provide sufficient time to fully incorporate sustainability and resiliency into the POCD, particularly in small towns that may contract consultants to update POCDs.

#### **Model Policy for Environmentally Sustainable Purchasing**

Section 18 of the bill calls for OPM to develop a model policy for environmentally sustainable purchasing that municipalities may voluntarily use. COST supports efforts to develop a model policy which many municipalities may be interested in utilizing.

#### **Local Capital Improvement Program**

Section 20 of the bill authorizes OPM to reimburse municipalities for the purchase of environmentally sustainable products under the Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP). COST supports efforts to allow municipalities to expend LoCIP funds on purchasing products that are environmentally sustainable.

#### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions**

COST has questions regarding Section 4(e), lines 123-126 of the bill. This language appears to create a cause of action for failure to comply with certain greenhouse gas emissions reductions. However, such reductions, which may include sector specific emission reduction targets, will not be submitted to the legislature for its approval until January 1, 2026. It appears, then, that the language in Section 4(e) is premature inasmuch as it speaks to a violation of yet to be determined greenhouse gas emissions reductions, making it difficult to evaluate the impact of this language on municipalities or other entities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

*Founded in 1975, COST is the state's only organization dedicated exclusively to advocating on behalf of the interests of Connecticut's smaller towns in the legislative process.*