



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
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Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Planning & Development Committee
March 13, 2024**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) appreciates the opportunity to comment in ***opposition*** to **HB-5475 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING AND CHALLENGES TO CERTAIN DECISIONS OF MUNICIPAL AGENCIES.**

HB-5475 makes a number of changes to local planning and zoning that are likely to trigger considerable litigation, exposing municipalities to increased costs associated with attorney's fees and liability insurance. These changes include revisions to the definition of "aggrieved person" and limitations on the right to protest certain zoning changes which will severely limit opportunities for local residents to weigh in on proposed projects affecting their communities.

Section 5 of the bill may place undue pressure on a municipality to exempt certain projects from review by local inland wetlands agencies. Although this would arguably streamline the approval process, it does so at the expense of local wetlands and watercourses.

Connecticut's small towns recognize the value of protecting wetlands, rivers, streams, and other watercourses which are critical to preserving wildlife and aquatic habitats, protecting the quality of water resources, and in enhancing the scenic beauty of our communities.

While we support efforts to promote greater housing opportunities, this bill imposes significant changes on local review and approval processes that may have severe unintended consequences on our communities.

Accordingly, COST urges opposition to the bill.