



**Testimony
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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 **SB-11, AN ACT COORDINATING CONNECTICUT RESILIENCY PLANNING AND BROADENING MUNICIPAL OPTIONS FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE.**

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.

COST supports provisions in the bill which will provide municipalities with additional tools and resources in addressing the need for greater climate resiliency. In particular, COST supports the creation of a Resiliency Improvement District which will operate in a similar fashion as a Tax Increment Financing District which has proven to be a successful model in assisting municipalities in funding development projects. A Resiliency Improvement District will help position municipalities to proactively respond to rising sea level and flooding concerns.

COST does have some concerns with the provisions of the bill, however, and the extent to which they impose additional administrative burdens on municipalities, including:

Local Plans of Conservation & Development

SB-11 calls for municipalities to incorporate numerous climate resiliency components in their local Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD). Updating POCDs is already a time-consuming and costly process. Small towns generally contract with consultants to update the POCDs, given limited staff with this expertise. Towns budget anywhere from \$50,000 to \$200,000 to update POCDs. It is anticipated that SB-11 will require towns to increase their budgets by between \$5,000 to \$20,000 to comply with the requirements of the bill. Several



towns have already incorporated climate resiliency into their plans, which may need to be updated to comply with the language of the bill.

Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment

Under Sections 11 and 12 of the bill, municipalities will be required to include a climate change vulnerability assessment as part of the local Plan of Conservation & Development. The CT Institute for Resilience and Adaptation (CIRCA) has developed climate change vulnerability models. COST supports revisions to the bill to ensure that municipalities may utilize these models rather than develop their own assessment, which would prove costly.

Geospatial Data

Section 17 requires municipalities to prepare a report on bridges and culverts which includes geospatial data, the locational coordinates of each culvert and bridge, the age and dimensions of each culvert and bridge, and any additional information deemed necessary by the Office of Policy and Management, in consultation with the state Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection and the Dept. of Transportation. These requirements, including “any additional information” may be costly to prepare.

To address these concerns, COST supports provisions allowing smaller towns to adopt a regional planning document that includes an appendix with information specific to the municipality, as suggested in the testimony of the Capital Region Council of Government (CRCOG). We also support the recommendations included in the testimony provided by the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NEECOG) to permit COGs to conduct the GIS analysis referenced in Sections 14, 17, and 18.

In addition, Governor Lamont’s proposed budget includes an additional \$5 million for the microgrid & resiliency grant program along with \$5.75 million in ARPA funds. The bill should clarify that these funds may be available to municipalities to update POCDs to comply with the new requirements.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB-11.

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.