

Capitol Region Council of Governments

241 Main St., Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: (860) 522-2217 FAX: (860) 724-1274

Web Page: www.crcog.org

DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 2007
TO: CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FROM: JON COLMAN, CRCOG POLICY BOARD
LYLE D. WRAY, PHD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL NO. 1056, AN ACT CONCERNING STATE REVENUE SHARING FOR COOPERATIVE MUNICIPAL ACTIVITIES

Thank you for the opportunity today to speak strongly in favor of Senate Bill 1056. The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) represents Hartford and the 28 towns around it. For more than 30 years, our members have collaborated on a wide range of projects from the CAPTAIN terminals in police vehicles to the Capital Region Purchasing Council now with more than 60 members. CRCOG is dedicated to helping members improve government efficiency and save tax dollars through shared services.

Service sharing is not new in Connecticut. Service sharing enables municipalities to provide higher quality services, have the funds to recruit and retain professional staff, and save money. Though there has been much progress, as documented in the ACIR report "Local Government Cooperative Ventures in Connecticut" published seven years ago, we have a long way to go to take full advantage of service sharing for better services and savings to taxpayers. Senate Bill 1056 adds a vital ingredient for future progress -- a state incentive program that municipalities can use to fund the larger, more complex service sharing opportunities that save the most money.

There are significant opportunities to use best practices from other states and create a truly comprehensive incentive system for local government service sharing in our state. We must go beyond the "low hanging fruit" and create true service efficiencies that save money and increase the quality of services. CRCOG believes local governments are supportive of this opportunity but lack the resources to implement these types of comprehensive service sharing programs. A strong incentive program would go a long way to reducing local government expenditures in the long term and providing better value to taxpayers.

The local government fiscal crunch facing many of our communities is not likely to go away any time soon. Without significant changes to the way local governments provide services, programs will be cut, professionalism and morale within local governments will suffer, and citizens will pay higher property taxes. CRCOG is committed to facilitating service sharing, but recognizes the need for a comprehensive incentive program to move us to the next level to get the most promising projects implemented. We strongly support SB1056 and ask for your support of this important piece of legislation.