

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: MARCH 11, 2008
TO: CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF FINANCE REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE
FROM: MELODY CURREY, MAYOR OF EAST HARTFORD AND
CRCOG LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR
SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 5028, AN ACT CONCERNING PROPERTY TAX
LIMITS, RELIEF FROM UNFUNDED MANDATES, REGIONAL PERFORMANCE
INCENTIVES, MUNICIPAL OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES AND PROPERTY TAX
CREDITS FOR CERTAIN VOLUNTEERS

CRCOG is the regional planning organization serving the City of Hartford and the 28 surrounding suburban and rural communities. CRCOG wishes to express support for select issues addressed in H.B. 5028 which reflect CRCOG's past positions on these issues as well as CRCOG's 2008 Legislative Priorities.

Regional Performance Incentives Program

We wish to focus our comments on H.B. 5028 on Section 9 of the Bill which speaks to the Regional Performance Incentives Program. CRCOG strongly supports the Regional Performance Incentives program, which provides incentives to towns to find ways to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and expand services by working together. Regional service sharing can enhance our effectiveness in law enforcement, infrastructure management, and other areas of service delivery, and it can do so while reducing costs and improving consistency.

Based on our experience with the 2007 grant program, CRCOG strongly urges elimination of the preference for projects where more than 50% of RPO member towns participate. This preference has the unintended consequence of disadvantaging projects where some of the most significant benefits of service sharing could be achieved.

- Often, the logical grouping for a shared service (especially regarding shared equipment or facilities) may only be two or three municipalities. It is actually less efficient in some cases to force a larger grouping of towns into a regional project.
- Projects with fewer towns can also be easier and more efficient to implement, and can act as a model for other service sharing initiatives.
- The 50 % target had widely different implications depending on the regions involved. In the Capitol Region, it meant that projects had to have at least fifteen towns participating. For the reasons stated above, often it is actually preferable to have smaller groups of towns participating in service sharing.

CRCOG SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 5028, PAGE 2

The 50 % preference handicaps excellent projects that have only a small number of participants, as well as RPOs with a large number of member towns. We strongly urge that this criterion be eliminated. Instead, criteria for the award of shared services funds should focus on the more relevant areas of whether the projects will reduce costs, improve services, improve consistency, and establish a model for other projects.

Increase in Prevailing Wage Threshold

With particular regard to prevailing wage requirements, CRCOG strongly supports Bill 5028's provision to increase prevailing wage thresholds for municipal public work projects to \$1,000,000 for new construction and \$500,000 for repairs, adjusting annually to the consumer price index. Municipal capital improvement projects are vital to educate our children, keep our roads and bridges safe, and build the libraries, senior centers and recreational facilities that enhance the quality of life in our communities. Prevailing wage requirements can greatly increase construction costs; higher thresholds for these requirements will allow municipalities to do more with limited capital improvement funds.