



**Testimony
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The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) supports the intent of HB-5008, which would encourage municipalities to establish high performance green building standards. However, as drafted, the bill creates a lot of issues that may create confusion and increase housing costs.

For example, many towns are exploring options to share building officials to reduce costs where possible. Having different codes adopted in different communities would undermine efforts to regionalize these services to improve efficiencies.

In addition, other building officials are only part-time and may be overburdened by codes that are adopted without being properly vetted by the Codes and Standards Committee. The Codes and Standards Committee process for adopting State Building Codes has worked well for many years.

Accordingly, if the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection or environmental advocacy groups would like to propose changes to the building codes to reflect green building standards, it should work within the construct of the existing State Building Code Process. Changes adopted as part of the State Building Codes have been enormously successful in ensuring that energy efficient products and water conservation technologies are incorporated in home and building construction.

In addition, programs such as Virtual Net Metering, GoSolar and SustainableCT have promoted the use of renewable energy technologies in Connecticut. Towns have supported these efforts and would welcome the opportunity to expand on these programs.

COST is concerned with bills that may negatively impact opportunities to grow our grand lists. For the vast majority of small towns, municipal aid has been largely flat funded or reduced over the last several years, despite escalating costs associated with delivering local services, including education, public health and safety. This has forced towns to cut critical programs and increase property taxes, unfairly overburdening residents who are increasingly concerned and frustrated that property tax hikes are negatively affecting the value of their home.

In addition, because a Bond Package has not yet been approved for this fiscal year, delays in obtaining Town Aid Road, Local Capital Improvement Program funds and other municipal aid have created uncertainty for towns in budgeting for local road, bridge and other vital



infrastructure projects. COST urges lawmakers to focus on adopting a Municipal Aid Package as soon as possible so that towns have the funding needed to maintain roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure.

COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.