



## **CCM Policy Committee on Education, Appropriations, Taxes & Finance**

Elinor Carbone (R) - Mayor of Torrington, Co-Chair  
Shari Cantor (D) - Mayor of West Hartford, Co-Chair  
Erika Wiczenski (D) - First Selectwoman of Willington, Vice Chair

Recommendations for consideration by CCM's Legislative Committee:

### **1. Increased Funding for Local Education and Addressing Para-Professional Shortage**

**ISSUE:** The current mechanism to provide education funding does not meet the needs of Connecticut's student population and is overly reliant on local property tax revenue. The cost for public education in our state is over \$12.3 billion with local property taxpayers burdened with more than 50% of that amount.

**RECOMMENDATION:** 1) Accelerate the phase-in of the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant formula, and increase funding of other education programs; 2) Increase funding for the Special Education Excess Cost Grant and; 3) Address the shortage of paraprofessionals by developing and funding an enhanced pathways program to increase the number of certified paraeducators and increase the number of potential teacher candidates in the pipeline through the mentorship of paraeducators.

### **2. Increase PILOT Reimbursement to Municipalities**

**ISSUE:** Property tax exemptions seriously erode the property tax base in many towns. Statewide, exemptions represent nearly 12 percent of the aggregated Equalized Net Grand Lists (ENGL). But this statistic seriously understates the issue for some communities. In 11 towns, exempt property, other than city-owned property, represents over 20 percent of the ENGL and in several the total is over 50 percent. While these are the most extreme cases, property tax exemptions affect every town in Connecticut, with the result that the taxes paid by non-exempt taxpayers are higher than they would be without the exemptions.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Fund Current Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) at Statutorily Adopted Levels.



## **CCM Policy Committee on Environmental Management and Energy**

Matt Knickerbocker (D) – First Selectman of Bethel, Co-Chair  
Danielle Chesebrough (U) First Selectwoman of Stonington, Co-Chair  
Brandon Robertson – Town Manager of Avon, Vice Chair

Recommendations for consideration by CCM's Legislative Committee:

### **1. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**

**ISSUE:** The cost of managing solid waste and recycling programs at the local level is becoming unsustainable and cost prohibitive especially with the recent Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA) closure and global market forces. CCM has been a leader in supporting the initiatives in waste material management and recycling in light of these circumstances and it is important that towns and cities continue with these efforts in partnership with the state. Research has demonstrated that EPR initiatives are highly effective.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Support efforts in partnership with the state to find cost effective solutions to reducing, reusing and recycling materials. Continue to explore innovative ideas in reducing the waste stream by focusing on EPR, food, packaging and containers.

- a) Provide free tire returns - the original cost of a tire would include the cost to dispose of. Very successful with mattresses and paint programs. It would reduce the costs associated with illegal dumping;
- b) Promoting food waste diversion in municipalities, schools, restaurants, catering facilities and grocery stores and the reduction of single use trays, to-go containers, cutlery and excessive "hard to dispose of" packaging.
- c) Streamline DEEP's permitting of anaerobic digesters.

### **2. Removal of Dead or Infested Trees**

**ISSUE:** Many parts of Connecticut have been impacted by the emerald ash borer gypsy moth and other infestations, which have severely damaged trees and pose risks within our communities. The scale of the damage is beyond the means of municipalities and financial relief from the state is necessary to combat the problem.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Establish a state program to provide grants for municipalities dealing with the high costs associated with dead tree removal to insure public safety and hazard reduction in a town's right of way.

### **3. Removal of the Virtual Net Metering Cap**

**ISSUE:** Virtual net metering (VNM) allows a system's owner to share any excess credits “virtually” with other owner-designated accounts, thus running their meters backwards too. Currently there is a cap that limits a municipality’s ability to share any excess credits since there because of the VNM cap that is in place. Removing the VNM cap will allow municipalities to realize the full potential of their clean energy investments and save taxpayer dollars.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Eliminate or Provide More Flexibility to the Virtual Net Metering Credit Cap (CGS 16-244u). Such change should include the requirement that electric distribution companies allow “unassigned” VNM credits to be applied to future bills on a month-to-month basis, known as “banking,” as expressed in CGS 16-244u(c).



## **CCM Policy Committee on Municipal Law and Labor Relations**

Ben Blake (D) – Mayor of Milford, Co-Chair

Pete Bass (R) – Mayor of New Milford, Co-Chair

Dan Jerram (R) – First Selectman of New Hartford, Vice Chair

Recommendations for consideration by CCM's Legislative Committee:

### **1. Legal Notices**

**ISSUE:** The requirement to publish full texts of certain documents and notices in newspapers is a costly mandate on towns and cities. During the Pandemic, the Governor issued an Executive Order allowing municipalities to publish meeting notices on their town's website. While in effect, residents searched the town website for information on upcoming meetings and public hearings, which resulted in better attended meetings and greater public awareness and participation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Allow municipalities to publish legal notices on a town website, rather than a newspaper or an abridged version in a newspaper and the full copy on the town website.

### **2. Prevailing Wage Thresholds**

**ISSUE:** Prevailing wage thresholds for renovations have not been updated since 1991. The results of adjusting the threshold that triggers the prevailing wage for renovations will allow local governments to make more efficient investments in infrastructure without increased reliance on revenue provided primarily by local property taxpayers. While the prevailing wage threshold was adjusted to \$1 million for new construction it has not kept up with inflation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Increased threshold for prevailing wage for new municipal projects to \$3 million and increase the thresholds that trigger the prevailing wage mandate for remodeling, refinishing, refurbishing, rehabilitation, alteration or repair of any public works project from \$100,000 to \$500,000.

### 3. Shared Services

**ISSUE:** Local governments are actively pursuing options for increasing interlocal collaboration and service sharing, but these efforts are often hindered by local charter restrictions, outdated state laws and inefficient labor practices.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Promote and eliminate barriers to shared services. Allow for towns and cities to more efficiently allocate resources by:

- a) Exempting the establishment of such service sharing agreements from the definition of “change in working conditions” for purposes of collective bargaining.
- b) When service sharing arrangements affect two or more collective bargaining units whether inter or intra town, the interests of all employees affected by the new arrangements will be represented by either a coalition of bargaining units or a new bargaining unit will be created to represent all affected employees.
- c) Prospectively prohibit any municipal collective bargaining agreement provision that limits the ability of a municipality to permit individuals or groups to provide volunteer services.
- d) Notwithstanding municipal charter provision that prohibits or limits a municipality from sharing services with other towns or cities, allowing municipalities to share services.

#### **Committee Statement of Concern:**

CCM’s policy committee on Municipal Law and Labor Relations has concerns with any bills that are similar to the following bill from the 2022 session, [SB 212](#) “*An Act Concerning Permanent Partial Disability Benefits and Pension Offsets*”. The proposed bill last year prohibited pension offsets regarding permanent partial disability benefits.

The committee highlights its opposition to the proposal as written since it would place a costly unfunded mandate on towns and cities by creating a financial incentive for claimants to remain out of work on Workers’ Compensation benefits rather than settling a claim and it prohibits a municipality’ ability to collectively bargain these benefits.

Currently, pension offsets are collectively bargained in good faith between municipal employers and employees and mandating the prohibition of pension offsets would circumvent the collective bargaining process.



**CCM Policy Committee on  
Land Use, Housing, Transportation,  
Infrastructure and Economic Development**

Matt Hoey (D) – First Selectman of Guilford, Co-Chair

Jeff Caggiano (R) – Mayor of Bristol, Co-Chair

Danielle Wong (D) – Mayor of Bloomfield, Vice Chair

Fred Camillo (R) – First Selectman of Greenwich, Vice Chair

Recommendations for consideration by CCM’s Legislative Committee:

**1. Transit Oriented Development**

**ISSUE:** The Committee discussed the need to increase affordable housing in transit areas and the challenges that some towns may face with the adoption of “as of right” housing within these areas.

**RECOMMENDATION #1:** Primary Transit Station: CGS Section 8-2 shall allow, as of right, with parking requirements, not to exceed, of 1 parking spot for studio and 1 bedroom and 2 parking spots for 2 bedroom or more dwelling units, mixed-use developments with at least four dwelling units, mixed-use developments with at least four live work units, or multifamily housing with at least four dwelling units at a minimum density of fifteen units per acre in at least fifty per cent of the lot area served by water and sewer infrastructure and within a one-half mile radius of that or any municipality’s primary transit station.

**OR**

**RECOMMENDATION #2:** Primary Transit Station: CGS Section 8-2 shall allow, as of right, with parking requirements, not to exceed, of 1 parking spot for studio and 1 bedroom and 2 parking spots for 2 bedroom or more dwelling units, mixed-use developments with at least four dwelling units, mixed-use developments with at least four live work units, or multifamily housing with at least four dwelling units at a minimum density of fifteen units per acre in at least fifty per cent of the lot area served by water and sewer infrastructure and within a one-half mile radius of that or any municipality’s primary transit station.

**A municipality may vote to opt-out, provided the legislative body of the municipality vote within one year of the statutes effective date.**

## **2. Traffic Enforcement Technology, Sidewalks and Bike Paths – Complete Streets**

**ISSUE:** In previous years, CCM’s Policy Committee on Transportation discussed the need to enhance safety for pedestrians through identified high risk areas. Some of the solutions discussed were the need for more sidewalks and bike paths as well as utilizing automated traffic systems.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Allow municipalities to utilize automated traffic enforcement technology and increase funding for sidewalks and bike paths to help ensure pedestrian safety.

## **3. Workforce Housing**

**ISSUE:** The Committee discussed the need to increase supply of workforce housing. Municipalities have seen an increase in individuals who work in a community, but cannot afford to live in the community in which they work.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Increase workforce housing through tax credits, brownfield restoration tax credits, and local option property tax exemption with state reimbursement.

Create a CCM member subcommittee to review and negotiate workforce housing legislation, including the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA) workforce housing proposal.



## **CCM Policy Committee on Public Safety, Public Health and Human Services**

Carl Fortuna (R) – First Selectman of Old Saybrook, Co-Chair

Rudy Marconi (D) – First Selectman of Ridgefield, Co-Chair

Recommendations for consideration by CCM's Legislative Committee:

### **1. Firefighter/EMT Recruitment and Retention**

**ISSUE:** The majority of Connecticut's municipalities fire suppression services are provided by volunteer firefighters. In recent years, towns have struggled to attract and retain these volunteers to adequately meet the needs of residents. In addition, local EMS services have been plagued by decreasing emergency medical technicians (EMT's), which has been exacerbated by – among other things - increasing training requirements.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Support a statewide legislative task force consisting of local CEO's, local fire and EMS personnel, and state officials from DESPP and DPH, to (1) examine the factors associated with the firefighter and EMT shortage, and (2) develop recommendations to address these shortfalls. This review should examine:

- a) Providing an income tax credit for volunteer firefighters;
- b) Developing a pipeline from colleges and universities into these professions;
- c) Offering tuition incentives for volunteers;
- d) Streamlining certification and recertification for firefighters and EMT's; and
- e) Providing sustainable and consistent state-supported funding for training;

### **2. Local Mental Health Services**

**ISSUE:** The pandemic has not only impacted our physical lives, but has also had a mental health impact. This impact has only been perpetuated by the problematic opioid crisis that has plagued our state for a decade. Local officials are on the front line in attempting to address this crisis, however have been faced with challenges associated with cost, personnel and resources to effectively combat these issues.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Enhance mental health services in the state by:



- (1) Removing burdens imposed on local social workers by modifying the frequency from which social workers need to be relicensed from an annual license to a biannual or greater renewal. This will reduce the administrative burden and costs associated with certification.
- (2) Support, expand and properly fund crisis stabilization units. These units are designed to align with the existing public health service systems to provide 24-hour short-term intensive placement for individuals who need immediate intervention during any emotional or behavioral crisis – not only a threat of immediate harm to themselves or others. These are effective units, staffed with a range of healthcare professional, at providing suicide prevention services, addressing behavioral health treatment, diverting individuals from entering a higher level of care and addressing the distress experienced by individuals in a behavioral health crisis.
- (3) Support and fund the development of a statewide Assisted Outpatient Mental Health Treatment (AOT) program. This type of treatment allows an individual to be involuntarily held who has exhibited a mental illness for which care and treatment in a mental hospital is appropriate, however does not pose a substantial threat of harm to self or others. Current law allows treatment only if the individual poses a threat to harm themselves or others. Other states, such as New York, have been successful in implementing such laws in an effort to enhance mental health services to the community.

### **3. School Security**

**ISSUE:** The topic of school security remains a focus for school and municipal leaders around the state. While there has been state financial assistance to support updates to school security, these grants are not longer being fully funded. In addition, an emphasis has been placed on the need and role of SRO's or armed security guards (ASGs) within our schools.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Enhance (1) school security grant program to allow municipalities to appropriately provide SRO's and ASG's in schools, and (2) state support in providing best practices regarding appropriate implementation of SRO's and ASG's in schools.