

# Planning and Development Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6647

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS.

**Vote Date:** 3/31/2021

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/22/2021

**File No.:** 551

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development

### Reasons for Bill

This bill will (1) create a Geographic Information Systems Advisory Council to consult with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, and (2) require the secretary to designate a Geographic Information Officer (GIO) to oversee a Geographic Information System Center.

### Response from Administration/Agency

**Diedre S. Gifford, Acting Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Public Health:** The current use of geographic information systems across state agencies has been accomplished to meet the needs of each agency. However, coordinating the sharing of spatial data and technology utilized has been fragmented. The Geographic Information Systems Advisory Council and GIO will bring agencies together in a cohesive fashion. DPH supports this coordinated effort as it will streamline access to geospatial data, ensure interoperable technologies are utilized, and provide a structure for ongoing efforts.

### Nature and Sources of Support

**Geospatial Educators, University of Connecticut: Cary Chadwick; Emily Wilson  
Patrick Ladd, GIS Specialist, City of Meriden**

Finding maps and geospatial information, even if it does exist, remains a significant challenge here in CT. We are one of only a handful of states without a state GIS center. We have chosen not to invest properly in technology, data, or in the people that are central to operating it effectively. It is time to fully invest in the power of geographic information to help our GIS students, enthusiasts, professionals, and the state of Connecticut, succeed.

**Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association:** Re-constituting a Geographic Information Systems Advisory Council and creating the position of GIO is an enormously useful action, however, the GIO must be supported by at least two technicians and one administrator to undertake the complex work of pulling together all the state's GIS resources across departments, agencies, and partners. Further, a stable funding stream must be put in place to ensure that this Center can recruit and retain excellent talent, as well as to plan for the regular acquisition of statewide data.

**Thad Dymkowski, Vice President, Connecticut GIS Network Steering Committee;**  
**Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns;**

State departments could benefit from the strength of a GIO instead of multiple isolated individuals in disparate divisions scattered across the organization. All municipalities across the state would benefit from defined data standards when addressing emergencies or disasters that fail to respect town boundaries. Smaller communities would have access to the services, tools, and data so that they can utilize these benefits as well.

**Matthew Fulda, Executive Director, Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments;**  
**Richard K. Grady, President, Applied Geographics, Inc.;**

**Lyle D. Wray, Executive Director, Capitol Region Council of Governments**

While we have been successful establishing a GIS program at the regional level, lack of statewide GIS standards has limited the usage of datasets beyond our COG boundary. The establishment of a Geographic Information Systems Office would be able to provide much needed data standards and authoritative statewide datasets that would enable data to be integrated across agency boundaries and provide greater return on investments.

**Connecticut Conference of Municipalities:** This bill represents productive dialogue of stakeholders over the last year to create centralized GIS information in Connecticut. We must take small but significant steps to make progress, and thus we support the bill.

**Samuel S. Gold, Executive Director; Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments;**

**David Scherf, Manager of GIS/Technical Services, City of Torrington**

A result of this incredible growth in the use of GIS as the core or centralized hub of governmental services is the need for coordination and guidance that reduces the cost of GIS in Connecticut by eliminating redundant efforts of data creation and maintenance among the varying levels of government, and that provides GIS users with consistent data and programmatic support.

## **Nature and Sources of Opposition**

There are no sources of opposition for this bill.

**Reported by: Dallas Emerle**

**Date: 4/22/2021**