



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Planning & Development Committee
March 5, 2021**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) respectfully submits comments in **opposition** to **SB-961 - An Act Concerning Foreclosure, Assignment and Other Enforcement Actions For Unpaid Sewer Assessments and Other Fees and Charges.**

Although we recognize that many individuals in our communities are facing financial difficulties due to COVID-19, COST is concerned that the bill will undermine the ability of towns to collect delinquent sewer bills and other fees and charges.

Water Pollution Control Authorities rely on sewer use charges to operate and maintain the waste collection and treatment system of a municipality. In addition, ensuring sufficient revenues to operate and maintain the WPCA is a condition of receiving financial assistance for pollution abatement projects under the Clean Water Fund.

COST is therefore concerned with provisions in the bill which will undermine efforts to collect sufficient sewer assessments needed to operate and maintain systems. The ability to lien properties and assign liens are effective tools in facilitating the collection of overdue bills. Some towns assign liens rather than pursue foreclosure or wait until the property is sold.

Limiting the assignment of sewer liens to unpaid charges in excess of \$10,000.00 would hinder the collection of delinquent bills by prohibiting municipalities from assigning liens for unpaid water charges unless the above criteria are met. In situations where a property owner is delinquent on sewer charges along with property taxes, the \$10,000.00 cap may preclude the delinquent sewer bill from being assigned along with the property tax lien, making it unlikely that the sewer department will be able to collect these debts.