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FRANCIS J. EVON
MAJOR GENERAL
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Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing
March 26, 2021

Major General Francis J. Evon, Jr., The Adjutant General

Testimony in Support of

S.B. No. 885 – An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government.

Committee Co-Chairs, Senator Osten and Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of S.B. No. 885 – An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government. Section 4 of S.B. 885 is a longstanding Military Department initiative necessary to clarify the Governor's authority with respect to the Connecticut State Guard, its organization and use. The provision codifies current practice, supports the Department's efficient response to state emergencies, and comes at zero cost to the tax payer.

By way of background, the Connecticut State Guard is part of the organized militia and the state armed forces, but is distinct from the National Guard and Governor's Guard. It is largely comprised of retired National Guard members who possess skills or knowledge useful to state military operations, including engineering, logistics, and medical services. Members of the Connecticut State Guard are not state employees. They are paid from state funds at a rate equal to the federal pay rate of their respective rank in the armed forces of the state. They are covered by workers' compensation only while ordered to military duty. It is a cost-efficient means for the state to accomplish its military missions.

The utility of the Connecticut State Guard was never more evident than during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. When called upon to provide a wide-range of support to the state's response efforts, the Department was able to quickly recall existing members and recruit new qualified experts from the civilian population into the State Guard through an established recruiting process. The members of the State Guard, many of them medical professionals, were instrumental in supporting the state's response to COVID-19, providing vital planning assistance to the Department of Public Health and the Governor's Office.

The Military Department's 2012-2013 audit report and subsequent Formal Opinion of the Attorney General (2017-09) indicated that revision of the current statute was necessary and would best serve the interests of the state. A similar stand-alone bill reflecting this fact has received a joint favorable report the last three legislative sessions, but has not been passed by both legislative chambers. The Connecticut State Guard is a flexible, responsive, and cost-efficient military force able to provide support to the state in a wide-variety of domestic emergencies or unforeseen circumstances. This proposal ensures that the State Guard can be utilized when it is needed most in accordance with current practice and without undue administrative burden.