



General Assembly

February Session, 2024

Raised Bill No. 336

LCO No. 1904



Referred to Committee on PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduced by:
(PD)

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF
HARTFORD COUNTY'S INDEPENDENT CONSUMER ADVOCATE.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 7-334a of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

3 (a) There is established an Independent Consumer Advocate to act as
4 an independent advocate for consumer interests in all matters which
5 may affect Metropolitan District of Hartford County consumers,
6 including, but not limited to, rates, water quality, water supply and
7 wastewater service quality. Costs related to the Independent Consumer
8 Advocate, including, but not limited to, hourly fees and necessary
9 expenses shall be paid for by the district. The annual amount of such
10 costs shall not exceed seventy thousand dollars [for the first year and
11 fifty thousand dollars for each year thereafter,] unless there is a
12 demonstration of substantial need made by the Independent Consumer
13 Advocate and approved by the [board of directors of the district]
14 Consumer Counsel appointed pursuant to section 16-2a.

15 (b) The Independent Consumer Advocate may appear and

16 participate in Metropolitan District of Hartford matters or any other
17 federal or state regulatory or judicial proceeding in which consumers of
18 the district are or may be involved. The Independent Consumer
19 Advocate, in carrying out his or her duties, shall [:(1) Have] (1) have
20 access to the records of the district, (2) have the right to make a
21 reasonable number of copies of district records, (3) be entitled to call
22 upon the assistance of the district's technical and legal experts, and (4)
23 have the benefit of all other information of the district, except for
24 employment records and other internal documents that are not relevant
25 to the duties of the Independent Consumer Advocate.

26 (c) [(1)] The Independent Consumer Advocate shall be a member of
27 the bar of this state and shall have private legal experience in public
28 utility law and policy but shall not be a member of the district's board
29 of directors or a person who has or may have conflicts of interest, as
30 defined by the Rules of Professional Conduct, in representing the
31 district's consumers as a class. [(2) Prior to November 1, 2017, and prior
32 to November first in each odd-numbered year thereafter, the Consumer
33 Counsel, appointed pursuant to section 16-2a,] The Consumer Counsel
34 shall select the Independent Consumer Advocate to serve for a two-year
35 term commencing on the [following] first day of January in each odd-
36 numbered year, except that the length of any term and the dates of
37 commencement and expiration of any term may be altered at the
38 discretion of the Consumer Counsel in the event of a vacancy or in the
39 best interests of the district's consumers. The Independent Consumer
40 Advocate may be terminated by the Consumer Counsel prior to the
41 completion of a two-year term only for misconduct, material neglect of
42 duty or incompetence. [(3)] The Independent Consumer Advocate shall
43 be independent of the district's board of directors and may not be
44 removed by the district's board of directors for any reason. The district's
45 board of directors shall not direct or oversee the activities of the
46 Independent Consumer Advocate. The district's board of directors shall
47 cooperate with reasonable requests of the Independent Consumer
48 Advocate to enable the Independent Consumer Advocate to effectively
49 perform his or her duties and functions.

50 (d) [(1)] The Independent Consumer Advocate shall prepare reports
 51 of his or her activities and submit such reports at the end of each
 52 calendar quarter to the district, the chief elected official of each [town]
 53 municipality receiving service from the district and to the Consumer
 54 Counsel. Such quarterly reports shall be posted on the Internet web sites
 55 of the district and the Consumer Counsel. [(2)] The Independent
 56 Consumer Advocate shall hold an annual public forum on the second
 57 Wednesday of October each year at a location where the district holds
 58 hearings, for the purpose of describing the recent activities of the
 59 Independent Consumer Advocate and receiving feedback from
 60 consumers. The district shall publicize the public forum through an
 61 announcement at the preceding scheduled meeting of the district, on its
 62 Internet web site and in a notice on or attached to its consumer bills. The
 63 Independent Consumer Advocate may hold additional public forums
 64 as he or she deems necessary.

65 (e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent any
 66 interested person, including, but not limited to, any individual
 67 consumer or group of consumers, from participating in any
 68 Metropolitan District of Hartford meeting or hearing on [their own]
 69 such person's behalf or through counsel.

70 (f) The Metropolitan District of Hartford shall promptly adopt any
 71 changes to its rules, regulations or other governing documents
 72 necessary to carry out the requirements of this section.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2024	7-334a

Statement of Purpose:

To amend provisions concerning costs relating to and the appointment and term of the Metropolitan District of Hartford County's Independent Consumer Advocate, and make technical changes.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]

