

February 27, 2026

Esteemed Chairs Rahman and Kavros Degraw,
Members of the Planning and Development Committee:

On behalf of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), I write in **support** of Raised Bill No. 5390, *An Act Concerning the Regional Planning Incentive Account*. This bill makes a small but important technical clarification: that regional councils of governments (COGs) may utilize Regional Services Grant (RSG) funds to support *both* a regional stormwater management and flood mitigation coordinator *and* a regional municipal solid waste and recycling coordinator, rather than being required to choose between these two functions.

I. THIS BILL CLARIFIES EXISTING POLICY

The Regional Planning Incentive Account was established to strengthen regional capacity and promote shared municipal services. The existing statutory phrasing can reasonably be read to require COGs to select *either* stormwater/flood mitigation *or* solid waste/recycling coordination. That forced choice does not reflect current statewide priorities, nor does it reflect how regions function in practice. Raised Bill 5390 does not:

- Increase the total funding,
- Create a new mandate,
- Expand substantive COG authority, or
- Require any region to fund both positions.

It simply clarifies that regions may support both roles where capacity and need justify doing so.

II. FLOOD AND STORMWATER CHALLENGES ARE INTENSIFYING

Municipalities across Connecticut are facing:

- Increasing frequency and severity of precipitation events;
- Aging culverts and drainage systems;
- MS4 compliance obligations;
- Repetitive loss properties and infrastructure damage.

Flooding and watershed management are inherently regional. Water does not respect municipal boundaries. A regional coordinator enables:

- Watershed-scale planning;
- Technical assistance for smaller towns;
- Capital project prioritization;
- Coordination with state and federal resilience funding.

Without regional capacity, municipalities act in isolation, often less efficiently and at higher cost.

III. **SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING ALSO BENEFIT FROM A REGIONAL APPROACH**

At the same time, Connecticut's solid waste system is under sustained strain:

- Disposal capacity constraints;
- Rising tipping fees;
- Recycling market volatility;
- Increasing regulatory complexity.

Regional coordination is essential to improve diversion rates, negotiate contracts effectively, pursue organics solutions, and provide technical assistance to municipalities.

These two domains are not alternatives. They are parallel environmental and fiscal imperatives.

IV. **THE CURRENT LANGUAGE CREATES AN ARTIFICIAL TRADE-OFF**

Requiring regions to choose between water and waste forces a false policy decision that the General Assembly likely never intended. Both are areas of large concern to the state, to regions, and to their member municipalities. The RSG program was designed to enhance regional capacity, not to constrain it. This bill restores alignment between statute and practical governance.

V. **A HIGH-RETURN INVESTMENT WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COST**

This clarification allows regions to:

- Avoid duplicative staffing at the municipal level;
- Achieve economies of scale;
- Improve compliance and technical expertise;
- Reduce long-term state exposure to environmental and infrastructure costs.

It does so without increasing spending or altering the funding formula. In short, Raised Bill 5390 is a technical correction that strengthens regional service delivery, respects municipal collaboration, and aligns the statute with the state's current environmental and fiscal realities.

WestCOG respectfully urges the Committee to report this bill favorably.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Francis R. Pickering
Executive Director