MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Strengthening Connecticut’s Sewage Right-To-Know Law

S.B. 927- AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE SEWAGE SPILL RIGHT-TO-KNOW STATUTE

BACKGROUND
Connecticut waterways remain vulnerable to raw and partially treated sewage spills due to much of our State being served by aging and outdated sewage treatment infrastructure. In July of 2020, a sewer line failure in Hamden resulted in a 2.3 million gallons sewage spill into both the Mill River and New Haven Harbor. The Mayor of New Haven was not given timely notification as required under the law and as a result, members of the public were not sufficiently warned about the event. Consequently, the community was left exposed and unaware of potential health hazards for several days after the spill.

JUSTIFICATION
The sewage right-to-know law was established to inform and protect the public from sewage spills in a timely fashion. This allows individuals who use Connecticut’s water resources for recreation and commercial purposes to take precautions when necessary. Unfortunately, the law falls short in meeting this important goal and is in need to improvements.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS

- Requires DEEP to implement a real-time public notification system to notify the public of sewage spills and sewage bypasses as they are reported, by December 1, 2021.

- Requires DEEP to publish an annual report including a summary of sewage spills occurring within each municipality, as well as any sewage spills that reached a water body, a summary of the total volume of sewage spilled, and any enforcement actions taken by the State in a given calendar year.

- Allows for dissemination through existing social media tools and other online resources to facilitate timely public notification, while giving DEEP the flexibility to distribute advisories using available resources.

- Eliminates the 5,000-gallon reporting threshold and require wastewater treatment operators to report whenever a sewage spill contaminates local waterways.

CITIZENS CAMPAIGN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS S.B. 927- STRENGTHENING CONNECTICUT’S SEWAGE RIGHT-TO-KNOW LAW

Citizens Campaign for the Environment is an 120,000-member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment.

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