

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7248

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING WELL WATER QUALITY.

Vote Date: 3/28/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/24/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

While regulations are developed by the Department of Public Health (DPH), HB 7248 allows DPH to establish provisions around water cross connections as well as share water test results with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Typically, these results were limited to the property owner, a prospective buyer, a state agency, or other people or entities when disclosure is required by DPH or the local health department.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Elizabeth Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA):

HB-7248 permits DPH to proceed with the implementation of policies and procedures necessary to administer provisions related to cross connection protections between a public water supply and any other water system while in the process of adopting these policies and procedures as regulations is being conducted. This will expedite efforts to address various issues and facilitate compliance to protect the public health and safety of our customers.

Diane Lauricella, Environmental Professional:

Ms. Lauricella greatly supports any effort to improve the communication framework for notifying well owners when contamination is found. She requests that the committee add language that includes ensuring that public health entities also have the obligation to educate individuals and explain what the results mean. Environmental health education is often lacking as most of the populace, as well as the legislature, have not taken a chemistry class since high school and may not fully realize what health risks, if any, could result from laboratory testing results.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Jim Heckman, General Counsel, CT Realtors (CTR):

CTR strongly opposes section 1 that would allow the implementation of provisions that are filed in the State's eRegulations system prior to adopting them. This is fundamentally contrary to the purpose of the state process which is to allow public comment to proposed regulations that may, or may not, go forward depending on what the Regulations Review Committee decides. CTR does not believe that any implementation requiring the regulatory process should be authorized ahead of the final regulations being adopted. CTR also opposes section 2 that expands reporting requirements of water quality tests to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Should there be a negative water test report on a property, the property owner is likely to take corrective action. Depending on the type of report, some corrective action is easily solved and managed inexpensively by the property owner. Corrective action is not done by the testing labs or companies and, therefore, such a report to DEEP may incorrectly stigmatize a property whose well water quality correction is then never reported. If property owners become aware that DEEP is watching their testing, they may be less likely to test believing that their property may be penalized or stigmatized, which is not in the interest of improved public health.

Daniel Lent, Lawyer, and Scientist:

Atty. Lent opposes this bill believing it would only increase the sewage treatment health crisis, drinking water supply and watershed pollution crisis, and the wetlands destruction crisis that Connecticut currently suffers from due to a "one size fits all" real estate development and zoning process. This unjustly enriches greedy real estate developers while destroying Connecticut's environment, protected wetlands, and drinking water supply. It is in the best interest of public health and safety that any bills relaxing sewage treatment standards and drinking water standards should be amended to include language to exempt any municipality in which more than seventy per cent of the land is within a watershed protection area.

Matthew W. Hart, Executive Director, Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG):

Section 2(c)(1) of HB 7248 seeks to establish test results of private and semi-public wells as confidential. This exception would be too limiting. Groundwater contamination, particularly in areas served by private wells, is a significant issue in the CRCOG region and elsewhere

around the state. We urge the committee to revise this bill to fully reinstate and reclassify private well data as public information, as it has been for decades.

Robert Rubbo, President, Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH):

Approximately 24% of Connecticut's population relies on private wells for drinking water. Groundwater contamination, whether natural or man-made, poses a significant public health concern in Connecticut, particularly in areas served by private wells. For over 60 years of publicly available information, local health departments have worked closely with industry stakeholders, state agencies, property owners, and communities on groundwater quality issues, addressing a wide array of contaminants including sodium chloride (NaCl) and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). There is no reasonable rationale for limiting access to this important environmental health data. The basic science of ground water hydrology tells us that the presence of a single contaminated private well indicates a risk to other nearby wells, thereby illuminating the need for publicly available reports. The current statutory approach handcuffs the ability of local public health professionals to protect residents, create informed communities, and prevent adverse health outcomes. Transparency in environmental health reporting should be the rule, not the exception.

Reported by: Dave Rackliffe, Asst. Clerk

Date: April 2, 2025