

Energy and Technology Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5249 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT AMENDING THE CHARTER OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL
CONNECTICUT REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY CONCERNING THE

Title: POTENTIAL ACQUISITION OF A WATER COMPANY.

Vote Date: 3/17/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/24/2026

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

[Energy and Technology Committee](#)

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

[Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121st Dist.](#)

[Sen. Julie Kushner, 24th Dist.](#)

[Sen. Stephen G. Harding, 30th Dist.](#)

[Rep. Savet Constantine, 42nd Dist.](#)

[Rep. Hector Arzeno, 151st Dist.](#)

[Rep. Lucy Dathan, 142nd Dist.](#)

REASONS FOR BILL:

House Bill 5249 proposes additional amendments to [Special Act 24-1](#), which contains the charter of the Aquarion Water Company to merge with the South Central Regional Water Authority (RWA-AWA). Special Act 24-1 created a new governing structure for the RWA-AWA, pending the transaction's approval by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), of which there would be a board of eleven members, six being appointed by the RWA representative policy board, and five from the AWA policy board.

After review of this structure, PURA denied its approval, stating that the structure of the AWA fails to 'promote local control of the public service companies of this state' (General Statutes § 16-11). The applicants then appealed PURA's decision to the Superior Court of Connecticut, then obtaining a remand on the grounds that PURA was not empowered to deny their application given Special Act 24-1.

This bill proposes clarification of the powers of the RWA, giving it authorization to acquire the assets of a water company, and attempts to avoid immediate shock to ratepayers.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The Substitute Language (LCO number 3100) adds Section 1 to the bill, which would make water districts and other governmental entities serving greater than 300,000 customer accounts a "water company" subject to PURA oversight. The bill also makes additional technical corrections to the original language.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Office of Consumer Counsel, Consumer Counsel, Claire E. Coleman

Claire E. Coleman, Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC), provided general comments on H.B. 5249. Then acknowledged that the bill would improve the governance structure of the proposed RWA-AWA entity. OCC additionally highlighted concerns about the transition from a regulated investor-owned utility to an unregulated public entity, which could reduce oversight and consumer advocacy protections. OCC concluded that while clarifying PURA's authority is positive, it does not resolve OCC's financial and consumer protection concerns.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut State Senate, Minority Leader 30th District, Stephen Harding

Stephen Harding, Senate Minority Leader for the 30th District, testified in support of H.B. 5249. He highlighted the bill's bipartisan goals of protecting water customers and the environment, noting that it corrects legislative language from Public Act No. 24-1 that denied consumers a voice.

State of Connecticut, State Representative 149th District, Tina Courpas

Tina Courpas, State Representative for Connecticut's 149th District, testified in support of H.B. 5249. The Representative then noted that her constituents have previously expressed concern over rising utility charges and highlighted the importance of this legislation in preventing or mitigating potential rate increases for households in her district, which includes Greenwich and Stamford.

Town of Greenwich, Selectwoman, Rachel Khanna

Rachel Khanna, Selectwoman for the Town of Greenwich and former State Representative for the 149th District, testified in support of H.B. 5249. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that PURA retains full statutory authority to review the proposed Aquarion Water Company acquisition. Selectwoman Khanna then highlighted her experience with prior legislation enabling a water authority acquisition and stressed that any buyout should be thoroughly considered before action is taken.

Town of Easton, First Selectman, Dan Lent

Dan Lent, First Selectman of the Town of Easton, testified in support of H.B. 5249. He stated that the bill affirms the legislative intent of Public Act 24-1, ensuring that PURA retains full statutory authority to review any change in control of a water company. He stressed that amendments in H.B. 5249 are necessary for PURA to fully protect the public interest and maintain oversight of Connecticut's water infrastructure.

Town of Ridgefield, First Selectperson, Rudy Marconi

Rudy Marconi, First Selectperson of Ridgefield, testified in support of H.B. 5249, explaining that the bill makes it clear that PURA should have full authority to review the proposed acquisition of Aquarion Water Company. Also supporting amendments from Metro COG and West COG to ensure that PURA can protect the public's interest in this transaction.

Town of Easton, Selectman, Nicholas D'Addario

Nicholas D'Addario, Selectman for the Town of Easton, is in support of H.B. 5249. The Selectman emphasized that the bill reaffirms the legislative intent of Public Act 24-1 and ensures the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority retains full statutory authority to review any proposed changes in control of a water company.

Town of Greenwich, First Selectman, Fred Camillo

Fred Camillo, First Selectman of the Town of Greenwich, testified in support of HB 5249, he described the bill as a technical fix to ensure that the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority retains full authority to review the proposed Aquarion purchase. Then said that the acquisition, being debt-financed, could affect ratepayers' water bills and municipal finances.

Town of New Canaan, First Selectman, Dionna L. Carlson

Dionna L. Carlson, First Selectman of the Town of New Canaan, is in support of HB 5249, she said that the bill affirms the legislative intent that the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority retain full authority to review changes in control of water companies, including mergers or sales.

Town of Westport, First Selectman, Kevin Christie

Kevin Christie, First Selectman of the Town of Westport, testified in support of House Bill 5249. Christie emphasized that the bill provides necessary clarification of the PURA's full authority to review changes in utility control, including governance structures, voting arrangements, and consumer representation.

Town of Monroe, First Selectman, Terrence P. Rooney

Terrence P. Rooney, First Selectman of the Town of Monroe, testified in support of H.B. 5249. The First Selectman stated that the bill clarifies the legislative intent of Public Act 24-1, ensuring that PURA retains full authority to review any proposed change in control of a water company. The First Selectman then noted that the bill helps PURA fully exercise its responsibilities over infrastructure investments, mergers, and sales, ensuring decisions are made in the public interest.

Town of Easton, Board of Selectmen, Kristi Sogofsky

Kristi Sogofsky, representing the Town of Easton, testified in support of H.B. 5249. She emphasized that the bill clarifies the legislative intent of Public Act 24-1.

Town of Trumbull, First Selectman, Vicki A. Tesoro

Vicki A. Tesoro, First Selectman for the Town of Trumbull, testified in support of H.B. 5249. Highlighting PURA's role in guaranteeing safe, clean, reliable, and affordable utility service, including overseeing infrastructure investments, and reviewing mergers.

Town of Fairfield, First Selectperson, Christine Vitale

Christine Vitale, First Selectperson for the Town of Fairfield, testified in support of H.B.

5249. Mainly she highlighted that PURA must be able to evaluate the weighted voting formula to determine whether the application meets statutory requirements and serves the public interest. She noted the importance of these issues for Fairfield and the 27 municipalities opposing the transaction, supporting amendments, and urged timely legislative action before PURA's final decision.

Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, Executive Director, Lori Brown

Lori Brown, Executive Director of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, testified in support of House Bill 5249, and said that the sale of Aquarion Water Company to the Regional Water Authority could undermine public oversight, reduce accountability in rate setting, and could even weaken environmental protections for watershed lands.

Advocacy for AARP Connecticut, Senior Director, John Erlingheuser

John Erlingheuser, Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP Connecticut, testified in support of H.B. 5249 to ensure the Aquarion Water Company remains under PURA regulation, maintaining affordable and safe, and potable water for all.

William Henley

William Henley, a ratepayer of the South-Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, testified in support of H.B. 5249. He emphasized that, due to the lack of prior public opportunities to comment on changes to the enabling legislation, it is essential for PURA to retain full regulatory authority.

Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments, Executive Director, Matthew Fulda

Matthew Fulda, Executive Director of the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG), testified in support of H.B. 5249. Saying the bill affirms the legislative intent of Public Act 24-1, allowing PURA to exercise full statutory powers when reviewing the proposed change of control of Aquarion Water Company.

Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), Executive Director, Francis R. Pickering

WestCOG, represented by Executive Director Francis R. Pickering, testified in support of H.B. 5249. The bill clarifies legislative intent from Public Act 24-1, ensuring that PURA retains its full statutory authority to review any proposed change in control of a regulated water company. Then encouraged the committee to adopt the attached substitute language to reinforce the original intent and ensure that the statutory framework functions as intended.

Advocacy for AARP Connecticut, Senior Director, John Erlingheuser

John Erlingheuser, Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP Connecticut, testified in support of H.B. 5249 He stressed the importance of keeping the Aquarion Water Company under PURA regulation to ensure safe and affordable water for all residents.

Joan McCoy

Joan McCoy, a resident, testified in support of H.B. 5249. She emphasized the importance of ensuring clean and affordable water for everyone and urged the Committee to pass the bill to protect public access to safe water.

Katie Montgomery

Katie Montgomery, a resident, testified in support of H.B. 5249. She emphasized that the bill ensures PURA retains full authority to review the proposed Aquarion Water Company deal.

[Ellen Jacob](#) testified in support of H.B. 5249.

[Rosemarie Emanuele](#) testified in support of H.B. 5249.

[Shari Olsen](#) testified in support of H.B. 5249.

[Matthew Tocks](#) testified in support of H.B. 5249.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Eversource Energy and Aquarion Water Authority, Representatives, David J. Borowy, Jeffrey M. Donofrio, George S. Logan, Jeffrey S. Normant, Daniel R. Canavan, and Vincent P. Pace](#)

Eversource Energy and Aquarion Water Authority jointly testified in opposition to H.B. 5249. They emphasized that the proposed bill is unnecessary because the current process already provides significant oversight and protections for customers and municipalities. They also argued that it could conflict with the Contract Clause, violate the Separation of Powers Doctrine and even override existing conflict-of-law provisions.

Aquarion and AWA developed a joint Offer of Compromise that was filed with PRUA and distributed to the towns served by Aquarion, which was designed to provide several enforceable commitments. This Offer of Compromise may be properly considered by the Authority in the pending remand order by the Superior Court.

Overall, Eversource and Aquarion urged the committee to reject H.B. 5249, citing that existing legal and procedural safeguards are sufficient, and the bill could create uncertainty and legal conflicts while attempting to change a governance structure already designed to protect the public interest.

[Smart Water CT, Representative, Marc Lemcke](#)

Marc Lemcke, representing Smart Water CT, testified in opposition to H.B. 5249. He emphasized that while public ownership of water utilities can be beneficial, the proposed acquisition of Aquarion Water Company is financially and structurally flawed.

[South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, Representative, Jamie Mowat Young](#)

[J](#) Jamie Mowat Young, Representative on the South-Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority and former Selectman of Killingworth, testified in opposition to H.B. 5249. She explained that the current governance model, which includes public hearings and municipal representation and ongoing financial oversight, already provides strong accountability, and protects customer interests.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Rivers Alliance, Executive Director, Alicea Charamut

Alicea Charamut, Executive Director of the Rivers Alliance, provided General Comments for testimony on HB 5249, stating it addresses governance concerns while highlighting the broader need for Connecticut to consider the long-term stewardship of its water resources. Then cautioned against locking utilities into profit-driven models that prioritize investor returns over public interest and urged stronger, uniform regulatory oversight for large municipal and regional water systems to safeguard Connecticut's water as a public trust resource.

**Reported by: Jadon MacCormack, Abigail
Lockwood**

Date: March 30th, 2026