



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
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Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST)
Before the Public Safety & Security Committee
March 3, 2026**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) **supports HB- 5046, AN ACT SUPPORTING FIREFIGHTER AND POLICE OFFICER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.**

COST's municipal leaders have tremendous respect for the work that our police officers and firefighters do in service to our communities. Unfortunately, municipalities are struggling to hire and retain police officers and firefighters given the many challenges and difficulties they face every day in performing their jobs.

We must do more as a state and a society to recognize and appreciate the services that our police officers and firefighters provide to our communities.

COST supports HB-5046 which provides incentives to encourage people to pursue careers in these fields. The bill waives tuition and fees for police, firefighters, and CT Fire Academy students pursuing undergraduate and graduate programs at state universities and colleges. It also requires the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) to develop a mortgage assistance program for firefighters and police officers.

These are powerful incentives which will help encourage people to pursue careers in law enforcement and firefighting and remain in these careers.

COST appreciates the opportunity to support the incentives included in HB-5046 to help recruit and retain law enforcement and firefighting professionals in our towns and cities.