



**Testimony**  
**Elizabeth Gara**  
**Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA)**  
**Government Administration & Elections Committee**  
**March 4, 2026**

**RE: SJ 37 – RESOLUTION PROPOSING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS.**

The Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA), which represents municipal, regional, and private water companies serving residents and businesses throughout Connecticut, **opposes SJ-37.**

Although the goal of the proposal is laudable – to protect an individual’s right to healthy and clean air, water, soil, and the environment – we are concerned that the proposed constitutional amendment may result in unintended consequences which will undermine the state’s current robust framework for protecting the state’s water resources.

As stewards of the environment, Connecticut’s public water systems are committed to protecting the purity and adequacy of the state’s water supply sources and providing residents and businesses with safe, high quality drinking water at a reasonable cost.

Currently, water utilities are facing considerable challenges in replacing aging infrastructure, improving the efficiency of treatment and distribution systems, and upgrading systems to comply with state and federal requirements, including 1) identifying and replacing lead service lines; 2) testing and treating public water supplies to address emerging contaminants such as PFAS, 3) hardening infrastructure to enhance climate resiliency, and 4) modifying dams and distribution systems to make state-mandated streamflow releases.

Given the long-term, capital intensive nature of these infrastructure investment projects, water utilities must have assurances that projects undertaken in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, many of which include specific compliance deadlines, will not be disrupted, or otherwise delayed. By providing individuals with broad authority to bring lawsuits challenging the validity of such laws and regulations, we are concerned that the proposed resolution may stall the completion of such projects, to the detriment of the state’s public health and safety.

In addition, water utilities rely on registered diversions, diversion permits, reservoir impoundments, and other regulated water uses to meet their obligation to provide safe, reliable high quality drinking water to customers. The adoption of SJ-37 may invite legal challenges to such regulated uses, jeopardizing the availability of drinking water supplies to meet the needs of residents and businesses.



Moreover, because the resolution does not define the extent to which the rights may be challenged under the amendment, it cedes authority to the courts to define the scope of such rights, which is troubling. This may subject regulated entities to potentially changing legal standards and the associated costs of upgrading operations to meet such standards.

SJ-37 also fails to recognize that Connecticut is already a leader in adopting policies that protect the state's environment and water resources. For example, Connecticut has adopted a comprehensive state water plan that provides for the balanced protection of the state's water resources to meet environmental, public health, public safety, and economic development goals.

In addition, Governor Ned Lamont initiated the Interagency PFAS Task Force, recognizing concerns regarding PFAS in our environment. It is implementing an action plan to 1) minimize environmental exposure to PFAS for Connecticut residents; 2) minimize future releases of PFAS to the environment; and 3) identify, assess and cleanup historic releases of PFAS to the environment. The state Department of Public Health recently issued updated drinking water action levels and is working with the state's public water systems to test and remediate PFAS in drinking water supplies.

Given Connecticut's comprehensive laws and regulations protecting the state's water resources, including drinking water supplies, and the need to rely on consistent standards and policies governing operations, SJ-37 is unnecessary and may result in significant unintended consequences.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in opposition to SJ-37.

*The Connecticut Water Works Association, Inc. (CWWA) is an association of private, municipal, and regional public water supply utilities serving about 2½ million people located throughout Connecticut.*