



General Assembly

February Session, 2024

**Raised Bill No. 336**

LCO No. 1904



Referred to Committee on PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduced by:  
(PD)

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF HARTFORD COUNTY'S INDEPENDENT CONSUMER ADVOCATE.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 7-334a of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

3 (a) There is established an Independent Consumer Advocate to act as  
4 an independent advocate for consumer interests in all matters which  
5 may affect Metropolitan District of Hartford County consumers,  
6 including, but not limited to, rates, water quality, water supply and  
7 wastewater service quality. Costs related to the Independent Consumer  
8 Advocate, including, but not limited to, hourly fees and necessary  
9 expenses shall be paid for by the district. The annual amount of such  
10 costs shall not exceed seventy thousand dollars [for the first year and  
11 fifty thousand dollars for each year thereafter,] unless there is a  
12 demonstration of substantial need made by the Independent Consumer  
13 Advocate and approved by the [board of directors of the district]  
14 Consumer Counsel appointed pursuant to section 16-2a.

15 (b) The Independent Consumer Advocate may appear and  
16 participate in Metropolitan District of Hartford matters or any other  
17 federal or state regulatory or judicial proceeding in which consumers of  
18 the district are or may be involved. The Independent Consumer  
19 Advocate, in carrying out his or her duties, shall [:(1) Have] (1) have  
20 access to the records of the district, (2) have the right to make a  
21 reasonable number of copies of district records, (3) be entitled to call  
22 upon the assistance of the district's technical and legal experts, and (4)  
23 have the benefit of all other information of the district, except for  
24 employment records and other internal documents that are not relevant  
25 to the duties of the Independent Consumer Advocate.

26 (c) ~~[(1)]~~ The Independent Consumer Advocate shall be a member of  
27 the bar of this state and shall have private legal experience in public  
28 utility law and policy but shall not be a member of the district's board  
29 of directors or a person who has or may have conflicts of interest, as  
30 defined by the Rules of Professional Conduct, in representing the  
31 district's consumers as a class. ~~[(2) Prior to November 1, 2017, and prior~~  
32 ~~to November first in each odd-numbered year thereafter, the Consumer~~  
33 ~~Counsel, appointed pursuant to section 16-2a,] The Consumer Counsel~~  
34 ~~shall select the Independent Consumer Advocate to serve for a two-year~~  
35 ~~term commencing on the [following] first day of January in each odd-~~  
36 ~~numbered year, except that the length of any term and the dates of~~  
37 ~~commencement and expiration of any term may be altered at the~~  
38 ~~discretion of the Consumer Counsel in the event of a vacancy or in the~~  
39 ~~best interests of the district's consumers.~~ The Independent Consumer  
40 Advocate may be terminated by the Consumer Counsel prior to the  
41 completion of a two-year term only for misconduct, material neglect of  
42 duty or incompetence. ~~[(3)]~~ The Independent Consumer Advocate shall  
43 be independent of the district's board of directors and may not be  
44 removed by the district's board of directors for any reason. The district's  
45 board of directors shall not direct or oversee the activities of the  
46 Independent Consumer Advocate. The district's board of directors shall  
47 cooperate with reasonable requests of the Independent Consumer  
48 Advocate to enable the Independent Consumer Advocate to effectively

49 perform his or her duties and functions.

50 (d) [(1)] The Independent Consumer Advocate shall prepare reports  
51 of his or her activities and submit such reports at the end of each  
52 calendar quarter to the district, the chief elected official of each [town]  
53 municipality receiving service from the district and to the Consumer  
54 Counsel. Such quarterly reports shall be posted on the Internet web sites  
55 of the district and the Consumer Counsel. [(2)] The Independent  
56 Consumer Advocate shall hold an annual public forum on the second  
57 Wednesday of October each year at a location where the district holds  
58 hearings, for the purpose of describing the recent activities of the  
59 Independent Consumer Advocate and receiving feedback from  
60 consumers. The district shall publicize the public forum through an  
61 announcement at the preceding scheduled meeting of the district, on its  
62 Internet web site and in a notice on or attached to its consumer bills. The  
63 Independent Consumer Advocate may hold additional public forums  
64 as he or she deems necessary.

65 (e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent any  
66 interested person, including, but not limited to, any individual  
67 consumer or group of consumers, from participating in any  
68 Metropolitan District of Hartford meeting or hearing on [their own]  
69 such person's behalf or through counsel.

70 (f) The Metropolitan District of Hartford shall promptly adopt any  
71 changes to its rules, regulations or other governing documents  
72 necessary to carry out the requirements of this section.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
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Section 1	July 1, 2024	7-334a
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**PD**      *Joint Favorable*