



## STATE OF CONNECTICUT

# NEWS RELEASE

Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Legislators, Advocates Applaud Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz's Selection of Attorney David Silverstone As First Independent Consumer Advocate for Metropolitan District**

**NEW BRITAIN, Conn. (November 8, 2017)** Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz today announced that she has selected David Silverstone, Esq., of West Hartford, as the first Independent Consumer Advocate for the Metropolitan District of Hartford County (MDC) water consumers. The selection of Attorney Silverstone is the culmination of an effort by Greater Hartford area legislators and advocates to ensure that consumers are well-represented in MDC proceedings and matters, such that the consumer voice and perspective will impact MDC decision-making for the benefit of the public. Public Act No. 17-1, *An Act Establishing an Independent Consumer Advocate for Metropolitan District of Hartford County Consumers*, establishes the advocate position for MDC consumer interests, including as to issues impacting rates, water quality, water supply, and wastewater service quality. The legislation was championed by Senator Beth Bye (D-West Hartford), Representative Derek Slap (D-West Hartford), Representative David Baram (D-Bloomfield), and Representative Tom Delnicki (R-South Windsor), among others. It is notable that Public Act 17-1 was the first item of legislation signed into law this session, which shows the priority that Hartford area legislators in particular gave to this effort.<sup>1</sup>

The legislation calls upon Consumer Counsel Katz to choose the MDC Independent Consumer Advocate, who will then operate independently on behalf of MDC consumers. Attorney David Silverstone is truly uniquely qualified to be the first MDC Consumer Advocate. He was the first person to serve as Connecticut Consumer Counsel in 1974-77, and he then served as the first

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<sup>1</sup> Section 4 of Public Act 17-1 also promoted fairness among MDC member towns in that each town will be held solely fiscally responsible for its own share of payments for MDC operations, as opposed to the present situation, where paying member towns have at times had to hold funds in reserve to cover for non-paying towns.

Consumer Advocate for the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA) from 1980-89. He later served as the President and CEO of RWA from 2001-08. He therefore has a wealth of experience with the consumer advocate role, the process of developing a new consumer advocacy office, and decades of dealing with water and utility law and policy.

Consumer Counsel Katz noted Silverstone's unique qualifications when announcing his appointment, stating, "Attorney Silverstone has more experience than anyone else in the state when it comes to establishing an independent consumer advocate office. He will bring needed transparency to the MDC process and provide a strong voice for MDC water consumers. Confidence in the water system is essential for both the community and the MDC."

Attorney Silverstone, in accepting the position, stated, "I am excited by the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the consumers of the Metropolitan District Commission. My roots are in consumer advocacy and I bring those experiences and my knowledge of the water industry to this position. I look forward to meeting with, and learning from, the consumers of the district."

Senator Bye said, "I am so happy and proud that we have arrived at this day, and I think Attorney Silverstone is an excellent choice. I am counting on him to be a strong advocate for all of MDC's consumers. We have an independent consumer advocate today because MDC's customers refused to stand by when they saw issues of concern. Consumer voices matter, and when the community speaks out, it makes a difference."

Representative Slap stated, "The creation of the consumer advocate was part of the very first public act of the 2017 legislative session and was passed swiftly and unanimously by the legislature. Today is another important step in strengthening the voice of MDC consumers. They deserve an independent advocate who will improve oversight, accountability, and transparency. Consumers should be able to have as much trust in the MDC's governance as they do in its water."

Representative Baram, who was just elected 3<sup>rd</sup> District Probate Judge, said, "It is extremely gratifying to see the fulfillment of legislation that I worked so hard on to promote transparency and information to the district members of the MDC. Attorney Silverstone will do an outstanding job in restoring confidence to MDC users and will strengthen the relationship among our district communities."

Representative Delnicki also praised the choice, stating, "South Windsor is in a unique position as about 1/3 of the Town is served by MDC water and we are not a member town. This legislation benefits not only member towns but also nonmember towns like South Windsor. The appointment of Attorney Silverstone as the Independent Consumer Advocate will give our residents served by the MDC a strong voice, greater accountability, transparency and peace of mind. As an advocate of honest open government and consumer rights I applaud this appointment."

Attorney Silverstone will officially start his work as the Independent Consumer Advocate on January 1, 2018, although he is already meeting with members of the community and MDC officials to gather information on the issues.

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