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**Testimony of State Representative Carlo Leone, 148th District
in Support of HB 5509, HB 5510, and HB 5585**

**February 26, 2008
Higher Education Committee and Commerce Committee
Joint Public Hearing**

Representatives Berger and Willis, Senators LeBeau and Hartley, Members of the Commerce Committee and Higher Education Committee, for the record my name is State Representative Carlo Leone from the 148th District in Stamford.

I would like to thank the committees for this hearing and the opportunity to speak here today. I am here today in support of two bills; The development of a film industry curriculum bill (HB 5509) and the skilled workforce development bill (HB 5510). I would also like to express to you my support for H.B. 5585 An Act Concerning Digital and Film Media.

In between sessions, I have had the pleasure of Co-Chairing the Hollywood East Task Force with Representative Berger and with members here from both committees. These two bills are the culmination of listening to all the input in order to craft legislation to further our goals.

First and Foremost, the success of our Film & Entertainment Tax Credit is making our vision of what Connecticut can be a reality. We have always had talent in regards to the industry, but it never has been coalesced in a way that has fostered an industry buzz that has attracted marquis business and celebrity talent alike. Only two short years ago, we had just a few productions in the state and we only spoke about productions long ago that showcased our state. Now the list of productions is well over 60, from the low budget independent films to the high profile studio films with Academy award wining directors and actors, and everyone wants to come here. We need to capture that enthusiasm and keep it going. HB 5509 and HB 5510 will allow this to continue to happen by creating a workable, sustainable workforce that our new exciting industry can be proud of.

These bills are about jobs, many of them. Jobs that create a positive impact for our state. Jobs that not only stem the tide of "brain drain" (losing students out of state) and turn that around into a "brain gain" of talent. I believe it is possible and that we can curtail the flight of our residents to the South and West for these types of jobs as we hear about almost daily by the media.

Of course there is glamour associated with this industry, and we should not be blinded by it. We can in fact use the positive aspects of fame and treat it as a strength to promote our state, not only to industry insiders but to anyone and everyone that will watch or participate in the making of the productions. Just imagine someone far way watching a picturesque scene, and emotional scene, or tender scene set in wonderful park or city, and wondering where it was filmed and they realize it is Connecticut. Those are images that can be far more powerful than any ad campaign.

And in fact, the industry has taken note. They want to come here and we should continue to welcome them, but we have to complete our vision. We need to create a workforce capable of meeting the demands and expertise required.

To give you a real successful example, many of you may have heard the great news of Blue Sky studios coming to the state with 300 new jobs. For those of you who don't know, this company is a digital media corporation that has produced such hit films as Ice Age and the upcoming hit Dr. Seuss Horton Hears a Who, featuring the voices of Jim Carrey, Carol Burnett and Steve Carrell. They hire and train many of the best and brightest in the workforce. There is no reason why many, if not all, should come from Connecticut. Blue Sky will need to grow and expand and we must do all we can to provide them with workers who can fulfill their needs. This example plays out for most productions as well. As we create the pipeline of a skilled workforce, the industry then has the continued incentive to create more and more jobs here in CT.

Passage of the HB5509 and HB 5510 will allow more companies like Blue Sky to locate or build new facilities here in Connecticut. By creating a career ladder of opportunity that any worker or student can enter and exit as they progress in the industry, we are communicating that we are committed to supporting and growing this small dream of ours into an important part of our economy and future.

This vision of ours, creating Hollywood East, is about creating a new industry to replace the declining ones, one that is environmentally safe, one that will pump revenue into our economy, one that can increase "brain gain," and most importantly one that will showcase all of our states strengths and beauty.

In closing with the support of your two committees, I am confident that we can create a first class film and entertainment workforce capable of meeting the demands of film production in our state. I do appreciate your time and thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I am available at any time and would be more than happy to answer any questions committee members may have.