

Testimony of Scott A Howard  
Before the Commerce Committee in  
**Opposition to RB 5878**  
March 11, 2008

Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, ranking members, and other distinguished members of the Commerce Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer my testimony in **opposition to RB 5878**, *An Act Concerning University of Connecticut Home Football Games*. While the sentiment behind this bill is admirable, I believe it could jeopardize the future growth and development of the UConn football program.

For the record, my name is Scott Howard. I am a senior at the University of Connecticut, and I was a four year member of the University of Connecticut Marching Band. I have personally witnessed the tremendous transformation that the football program has undergone over the past four years. Rentschler Field has become a place that is near and dear to my heart. The home field advantage the Huskies have is undeniable, the clearest evidence being the undefeated record there this past football season.

This bill came about as a result of ongoing contract negotiations between the University of Connecticut and the University of Notre Dame. As all of you probably know, the contract was for a ten year series, but the five home games that UConn would receive would be played at Gillette Stadium in Foxboro, MA and Giants Stadium. I would be lying if I didn't say part of me was outraged by this. Initially, the gall that Notre Dame showed in demanding this provision of the contract was appalling to me. I wanted Jeff Hathaway to turn Notre Dame down.

After I thought about it and talked with some people, I began to soften my stance a little bit. Notre Dame is a nationally recognized name with immense drawing power. Quite frankly, they can push us around a little bit. Even though they went 3-9 last year and our football team went 9-4, they remain a bigger name. In addition, the exposure and revenue potential for our football team is tremendous. Being on NBC once a year will have immense benefits for our school and football program. And this is only the beginning. Who knows how else UConn will profit down the road after playing a team such as Notre Dame.

I believe very strongly that RB 5878 should not pass. The University is a state agency, and falls under your supervision, but the General Assembly simply cannot get involved in this situation. You can't handcuff Jeff Hathaway when he is trying to negotiate contracts with big time schools. If this bill passes, I fear we will not be able to attract any top tier opponents in the future. Imagine yourself as the AD of Ohio State, USC, or LSU. Would you want to schedule a series with a school whose state legislature could potentially jump in the middle of the negotiating process? I personally would not want the hassle. Those schools do not have problems getting opponents to schedule with them and would simply look elsewhere.

I applaud this legislature for the support they have given the University of Connecticut and the football program. The state has come to grow and love the football team, and Rentschler Field is a special place to be on Saturdays. I recognize and admire the sentiment behind this bill, but I urge you not to stunt the program's growth.