



Good afternoon Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger and members of the Commerce Committee. We are here today to support SB 254 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A BMX AND SKATE PARK IN EAST WINDSOR.

We are members of the East Windsor BMX Skate Park committee, and our goal is to construct a BMX Skate Park for the entire community to enjoy. East Windsor has a very large percentage of children who enjoy BMX freestyle biking and skate boarding as their sport of choice, and it is a very physical and disciplined sport at that. Unfortunately, we don't have any facilities available for them to practice and participate in this sport. There is a dire need for town-supported facilities for the teenage population, and it's a proven fact that a large majority of the teens in our community would benefit from having a skate park. Any time of the year you drive along the streets of East Windsor, you are going to see bikers and in the absence of snow and slush, skate boarders and scooters too. There are no sidewalks, there is no teen center, there are no "bikes and skateboards welcome" signs at any of the schools, parks, parking lots or anywhere else...there is no approved place at all for these children to perform their sport. We are sending the message to our teens that they have been forgotten. We have been approved by the Board of Selectmen as a fund-raising committee and have been working tirelessly side-by-side our teens to raise the funds needed to proceed. The Board of Selectmen has granted us the land to build the park on and is in total support of this venture. It is our job to now raise the funds.

We started this project in early 2008 for a number of reasons. East Windsor has a wonderful playground for the younger children of our community, a senior center with plans of expansion, restaurants and clubs for the adults, but we've neglected a very important part of our town- the young teenagers. We feel they deserve a safe place to practice their sport of choice. In an age where kids spend an average of 4 hours a day in front of a television or computer, with 1 out of 4 being obese, we should be fostering and supporting physical activities. We do so for basketball, baseball, soccer and other traditional sports and have missed a huge population of BMX bikers and skate boarders. There are over 2 Million BMX riders and 12 million skateboarders in the US, and the skateboarding population of the US was projected to bypass the number of kids playing baseball in 2008. We have baseball fields, but where are the BMX and skate parks? Incidentally, skate boarding is currently being considered for the 2012 Olympics.

In 2005, my son and his best friend were hit by a car while riding their bikes home from a friend's house, one of the places they currently practice their sport on unapproved and likely unsafe home-made ramps that they dug up the scrap wood to make.

My son almost died and will carry the emotional and physical scars for the rest of his life. We currently have a national honor society student who is heading to college doing community service for riding his bike behind a convenience store in town which was unapproved for biking. In December 2008, a 16 year old boy was struck by a car and killed while riding his bike in town.

The teenagers of our community need the support of the state, the community, and the town to reach their goal of a local BMX Skate Park. These young men and women have been with us from our first meeting before town officials to every meeting since as well as working every fundraiser we've done so far. They increase in numbers each time we meet. They have had the privilege of helping participate in the local government processes of beginning a committee to the final approval to build the park and from providing park feature specifications to actually meeting with prospective vendors. We hope that they can be involved in and witness the State of Connecticut's support too. They are so hopeful that they will be able to enjoy this park themselves and pass it on to future generations of East Windsor youth.

We are very respectful of the state of the economy as it affects each and every one of us. At the same time, we feel very strongly that you can't put a price on a life, not to mention the many we're trying to protect or the one that has already been lost. Please consider helping us to make this happen.

Thank you,

Patty Donahue and the  
BMX/Skate Park Committee