

# UNIFORMED PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT

AFFILIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

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February 18, 2009

Dear Senator DeFranzo, Representative Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Paul J. Rapanault. I am the Director of Legislative and Political Affairs for the Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut. Our 4,500 members serve in 55 fire departments throughout the state.

I am addressing you today in **OPPOSITION** to **H.B. 5898 AAC THE PRIVATIZATION OF CONNECTICUT'S AIRPORTS**. The Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association urges your committee's rejection of this legislation.

After decades of state and local government experiments with contracting out, the benefits of private delivery of public services have proven to be elusive. And now more than ever, when government is the front line in homeland security, the nation understands the importance of an experienced, dedicated public-sector workforce and the dangers of privatization.

Contracting out often results in higher costs, poorer service, increased opportunities for corruption and diminished government flexibility, control and accountability. Contracting out can compromise the security of information and public assets. In addition, the local economy and tax base may suffer as decent jobs with benefits are replaced with low-wage, no-benefit jobs provided by companies located in another part of the country or even overseas.

Bradley Airport adheres to the FAA mandates that govern how fire departments are operated. The Bradley Airport Fire Department maintains fire service staffing to a safe level and even provides paramedic service to provide advanced life support in and around the facility. In the event of a sale of the airport to a for-profit company, the history of privatization of public services points to diminished safety for the general public, workers and fire fighters.

In addition, Air Guard Firefighters, currently assigned to Bradley, play a support role to Bradley Fire and the surrounding towns and could be lost in the event of privatization. It is more critical than ever to maintain fire, rescue and medical services provided around airports and other high asset facilities. It is our belief, based on nationwide experience with for-profit fire service providers, that privatization of public services can only end poorly, placing all at risk.

We urge your rejection of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

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