

## Committee on Commerce

### **Testimony of Charles H. Steedman In Support of SB 455, An Act Concerning the Connecticut Sports and Marketing Corporation**

March 16, 2010

Good afternoon Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger and members of the Commerce Committee. My name is Chuck Steedman. I am Senior Vice President of Northland\* AEG and we manage the XL Center, Rentschler Field and the Hartford Wolf Pack.

I am here today to express my strong support of SB 455, An Act Concerning the Connecticut Sports and Marketing Corporation. Put simply, this legislation is vital to the State of Connecticut maintaining and enhancing its position in the marketplace for the attraction and retention of major sporting events and competitions.

I address the committee as a person that is on the front line of trying to attract these major sporting events and competitions to both the XL Center in Hartford and Rentschler Field in East Hartford. In my capacity as Senior Vice President and General Manager of Northland AEG, I am responsible for soliciting, negotiating, securing, contracting and ultimately operating these events for our region.

The presence of a Sports and Marketing Corporation, or as they are more generically referred to in the industry as a "Sports Commission" will greatly enhance the visibility of our state with the various entities that own or stage these events. Many, many other states, regions and cities have established sports commissions that constantly are attempting to source these events. There are numerous sports industry trade shows and events and members of these sports commissions establish a strong presence in order to best present the cities and states they represent. In the course of business, they also establish close

relationships with the people who are responsible for placing the events, thereby leading to business advantages when prospective events are sourced. The people responsible for placing these events fall into many categories ... in the Olympic Sports, international and national governing bodies oversee a variety of world, national and regional championships; in collegiate sports, the NCAA administers regional and national championships in a wide variety of sports; numerous television networks and private companies and promoters also own or control a wide range of events from ESPN's very successful X-Games to the BassMasters Classic to world class cycling events.

In the vast majority of cases, the placement of these events is handled through a very competitive bid process. The organizing entity will issue a request for proposal, the cities and/or states will submit bids, short lists of finalists will be announced and negotiations undertaken to ultimately award a "winner".

Clearly, attracting and staging these events has a significant impact on the local economy. The National Association of Sports Commissions has developed what I feel is a very objective economic impact tool that specifically measures both the direct and indirect impact of major sporting events ... I like to think of major sporting events as large conventions that just happen to come with significant marketing impact ... not only do these events fill hotels, restaurants and shopping, but in many cases they also contain live national or international television that serves as a marketing post card for the state. 4-600 people work at an event at the XL Center or Rentschler Field. Absent these events, those people would not be working.

In addition to sourcing potential events, one of the main roles of a sports commission is to provide a central clearing house during the bid process. Working with the local hotel,

business and civic communities, a sports commission can be a great resource in corralling the type of broad-based financial and logistical support that is required to both bid for and ultimately operate these events.

After Hartford was awarded the 2010 USA Gymnastics Visa Championships, I attended a seminar in Indianapolis that USA Gymnastics hosted for cities and states that were interested in hosting the upcoming 2012 Olympic Trials as well as possible World Championships in later years. I was extremely proud to represent Hartford. I will also share with you that among 15 cities represented, Hartford was the only location in the room represented solely by an arena and not a sports commission.

While we have had recent success in attracting some major events to Hartford, it is important to note that in doing so, we have to overcome the notion that the lack of a viable sports commission indicates that there isn't broad support for our region when bidding on or hosting events. As one CEO of a national governing body recently said to me, "Who is going to do all the work? Your staff can't possibly interface with all of the constituencies that we need to make this work."

In summation, we strongly support SB 455, an act concerning the creation of the Connecticut Sports and Marketing Corporation. Simply put, those of us who are out in the market trying to secure these major events need the assistance as we try to compete against other well organized and funded bids. Our economy needs the vitality these events provide whether it be in jobs, direct spending by visitors or a national television audience focusing on Hartford.

Thank you for the chance to address you today and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.