STATEMENT REGARDING

Senate Bill 109: *An Act Concerning the Bradley Board of Directors*

Commerce Committee
February 16th, 2010

The MetroHartford Alliance is Hartford's Chamber of Commerce and the region's economic development leader. Our investors include businesses of all sizes, health care providers, institutions of higher education, and 34 municipalities. The Alliance's mission is to ensure that the Hartford Region competes aggressively and successfully for jobs, talent and capital so that it thrives as one of the country's premier places for all people to live, work, play, and raise a family.

Among the key initiatives of the Alliance's four-year strategic plan is a strong focus on transportation infrastructure investment, as well as the enhancement and promotion of Bradley International Airport as a key economic development driver for our state. In particular, we are working with the Bradley Board to reinstate international service to Europe and to help us promote increased international business traffic and business development with the direct exchange of commerce and capital, talent and tourism opportunities.

Overall, our investors recognize the tremendous value of having an international airport located in our region. We applaud the Department of Transportation for its maintenance of the airport and the outstanding staff who perform the airport's vital marketing and route development functions each day. One of the legislative proposals before the committee today addresses the governance of the airport, and we agree that it is important to consider whether the current governing structure enhances the airport's ability to grow.

For example, providing the Bradley Board of Directors more autonomy could facilitate hiring decisions, including setting appropriate compensation, regarding

staff at the airport and would also give the Board greater control over the airport's budget for marketing and route development. As a result, the Board would determine how and when all airport staff are approved for travel for route development and marketing purposes. This is essential to their ability to perform their duties without delay in a very competitive profession.

Such autonomy would put Bradley on par with other states' privately-owned and operated airports, with whom we are competing for direct flights and international service. Those airports have direct control over their marketing dollars and, therefore, greater flexibility assembling the incentive packages that are critical to attract new airlines. Bradley is at a disadvantage and has potentially missed out on opportunities to grow based on this lack of autonomy.

We look forward to working together with the committee this legislative session and ask you to support increased autonomy for the Bradley Board of Directors to support the marketing efforts of one of our state's key economic drivers.