

HB 6529



## TOWN OF OXFORD

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### Testimony – Mary Ann Drayton-Rogers, First Selectman, Town of Oxford

#### Re: AN ACT PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE SURROUNDING AREA OF OXFORD AIRPORT

The Town of Oxford hosts the Waterbury-Oxford Airport. The airport master plan defines the primary mission of the airport as hosting aviation services for 60 plus wide cabin corporate jets. Aviation services jobs on the airport involve maintenance, storage, administration and charter sales for these jets and could expand into crew training, flight testing and high tech research and innovation. The Oxford airport currently boards 62 turbine aircraft and is currently attempting to obtain approvals from OPM to build additional facilities to board 30 additional aircraft owned by fortune 500 companies.

The airport is surrounded by 3.5 square miles of industrially zoned property in Oxford and additional property in adjoining Middlebury and Southbury in the area surrounding I-84 Exit 16. Oxford has enjoyed significant growth since 2000, i.e. 29% population growth, 50 % in-town employment growth, 21 new industrial buildings built since 2004.

Oxford has been attracting out of state business relocations and benefited from developers and investors willing to fund new flex-space buildings that attract start-ups and businesses that need to expand into larger facilities.

Technology Park is a recently approved Class 1 campus environment representing 20 buildings totaling one million square feet. Ten buildings are planned for Oxford and ten additional buildings are planned for Middlebury.

Middlebury has an adjoining campus properties owned by Chemchura Inc. plus a new area immediately north of the airport runway that is currently residential but involved in a buyout proposal that could result in redefining the area as part of a new Middlebury industrial zone.

Southbury also has industrial development on Old Waterbury Road which is part of I-84, Exit 16 area. Southbury could consider rezoning property on Route 188 in the vicinity of Airport Access Road to provide more opportunity to participate in industrial development in the airport vicinity.

The development areas in the three towns described above represent an opportunity to define and develop a regional economic center that could target aviation, distribution, and high tech manufacturing businesses and the availability of land to support other business clusters should expand the areas potential.

The Town of Oxford has approved development of a Foreign Trade Zone (by referendum) which could be integrated into the regional center and provide US Customs Services to the regional center and the aircraft fleet. A significant percentage of aircraft dispatched from the airport fly internationally and would benefit from on airport customs services.

A fully engineered and permitted Natural Gas Fired power plant (Towantic Energy) owned by GE is approved and fully permitted in Oxford's Woodruff Hill Industrial Park. When built, Towantic Energy would facilitate formation of a regional Energy Improvement District (EID) that could provision power at discounted rates to the regions businesses while providing waste heat to airport hangars and other industrial buildings in the area. Operation of the FTZ and EID could be accomplished under a newly formed regional operating authority.

Based on the legislative exception noted above, the Legislature should consider granting enterprise zone benefits to a newly formed Regional Economic Development Organization that could cooperatively developed the industrial space in the adjoining towns.

The Town of Oxford is interested in engaging in this effort and willing to commit resources and effort to explore the opportunity and bring the proposed regional economic district to fruition.

Regards

Mary Ann Drayton-Rogers  
First Selectman  
Town of Oxford, Connecticut