



State of Connecticut

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Testimony on
HB 6456 - An Act Establishing A Learn Here, Live Here Program
SB 1003 - An Act Concerning the Connecticut Airport Authority
Commerce Committee Public Hearing
March 1, 2011

Good morning Chairmen LeBeau and Berger, and Ranking Members Frantz and Camillo, and members of the Commerce Committee. I am here to express my support for H.B. 6456, *An Act Establishing A Learn Here, Live Here Program* and S.B. 1003, *An Act Concerning The Connecticut Airport Authority*.

One of the largest issues facing Connecticut is the loss of our educated youth to other states due to our high cost of living and unfriendly business climate. Connecticut is currently ranked number one in the country in losing its educated youth to other states. If this problem continues, the long term effect could be disastrous. As young people flee the state, our population will continue to grow older with fewer, young professionals available to share the burden of paying taxes that help pay for services to our neediest citizens, thus placing further strain on the state's economic condition. The state simply cannot afford to lose its younger population.

The Learn here, Live here program is an affordable housing program that's purpose is to keep young professionals in Connecticut. The program would allow graduates of Connecticut's institutions of higher education or regional vocational-technical schools to segregate up to five per cent of their state income tax paid into a first time home buyers fund. This fund would be managed by the state treasurer and the money in the fund must be used within 10 years for the purposes of a down payment on a home. Keeping in mind the tough economic times we are living in, we felt that it was best to begin the program for those who graduate on or after January 1 2013. If a graduate moves out of state, they would no longer be eligible to contribute to the account. The account would still remain open for ten years in hopes that the participant moves back to Connecticut and settles down to live and work in Connecticut. If after ten years has elapsed, and the individual has not used the fund to purchase a home, the money in the fund would be returned to the General Fund.

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It is our hope this kind of program will keep our young professionals in the state while assisting businesses in finding and hiring the state's best and brightest. Businesses around the state often discuss the high cost of living and lack of young professionals as one of the reasons they consider moving out of state. This bill will not only provide incentive for our young population to stay but also encourage businesses to stay.

I would also like to comment on S.B. 1003, the Governor Malloy's proposal establishing The Connecticut Airport Authority.

Governor Malloy has put forth a proposal regarding Connecticut's airports and while we applaud his proposal, we do not feel it goes far enough. The Governor's proposal is more business as usual. Under his proposal, the new Connecticut Airport Authority's workforce will be comprised of state employees who will be members of a bargaining unit and collective bargaining agreements. The Authority will have the ability to increase its workforce at its own discretion which could lead to an increase in the state's workforce. This new Authority will give the Governor more power over the members of the board. Currently the Governor appoints one member, under this proposal; the Governor would appoint three members. There is no need for the Governor or the State of Connecticut to be in the business of running airports or ferry services; we should be trying to shrink the government's role not increase it.

On January 25th, Legislative Republicans unveiled its Common Sense Commitment Proposals for the 2011 Legislative Session. One of those proposals was to establish a quasi-public port authority having independent bonding authority, management and ownership control of all state owned airports and ferry services. There are currently only a handful of state-owned and operated airports in the country. Our proposal would create a quasi-public port authority and enable us to eventually sell Bradley International Airport, Brainard Airport and any state owned ferry services to the port authority for fair market value. The sale to the quasi-public port authority would bring in much needed revenue to the state while privatizing an entity that the state has no business in owning.

The Legislative Republicans' proposal to create a quasi-public port authority would decrease the number of state employees and lower the state's payroll. The state cannot afford the workforce it currently has and creating a new authority that employs state workers is not the responsible thing to do. Our proposal will decrease state involvement in our state's airports and put them into the hands of private companies that are best-equipped to maximize the potential of Bradley International Airport, as well as other airports throughout the state.

We have all discussed the need to create a smaller and more efficient government and this proposal would go a long way to achieving that goal.

If you have any questions, I would be happy to take them now.