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Written Testimony - CON Bills 6387 & 1007

GOOD MORNING, MY NAME IS JENNIFER PHELPS, AND I AM HERE TO SPEAK IN OPPOSITION TO NEW TAXES AND FEES RELATED TO SMALL, GENERAL AVIATION AIRPLANES HERE IN CONNECTICUT (GOVERNOR'S BILL 6387 AND 1007.

I AM NEITHER AN AIRPLANE OWNER, NOR A BUSINESS OWNER, AND CERTAINLY NOT A MILLIONAIRE TRYING TO FIND AN EXPENSIVE HOBBY (THAT'S WHAT BOATS ARE FOR). I AM A NEWLY-LICENSED PILOT, WHO HAS BEEN PURSUING HER DREAM OF LEARNING TO FLY, AT SIKORSKY AIRPORT IN STRATFORD.

LIKE MANY OTHERS, I DON'T FLY TO EARN A LIVING- I FLY FOR FUN, TO SHARE WITH OTHERS, AND TO HELP OTHERS WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THE FREEDOMS OF A SMALL AIRPLANE. GENERAL AVIATION PILOTS DO A LOT - WE BRING RESCUED CATS AND DOGS TO CONNECTICUT WHERE THEY CAN BE ADOPTED, GIVE CANCER PATIENTS TRANSPORT TO OUR HOSPITALS FOR TREATMENT, AND GENERAL AVIATION ALSO BRINGS IN OVER 2.4 BILLION DOLLARS OF REVENUE TO CONNECTICUT EACH YEAR.

EVERY TIME I AM AT THE AIRPORT, I SEE PEOPLE FLYING HERE FROM NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY, MASSACHUSETTS, AND EVEN FURTHER AWAY, IN ORDER TO BUY GAS, LEAVE THEIR PLANES FOR REQUIRED MAINTENANCE, OR TO HAVE NEW EQUIPMENT INSTALLED OR UPGRADED.

IT COSTS A FAIR AMOUNT TO KEEP A PLANE AIRWORTHY, AND OUR BUSINESSES IN CONNECTICUT ARE KNOWN FOR DOING FANTASTIC JOBS, AT FAIR PRICES. BUT IN ONE OF THE SMALLEST STATES IN THE COUNTRY, AND WHEN DEALING WITH ONE OF THE MOST MOBILE GROUPS, IT'S ALL TOO EASY FOR AN AIRPLANE OWNER TO BRING THEIR BUSINESS ELSEWHERE IF COSTS ARE RAISED ONLY IN THIS STATE. DID YOU KNOW A PILOT COULD FLY AN AVERAGE OF JUST 25 MINUTES TO BRING THEIR BUSINESS TO A NEIGHBORING STATE?

I REALLY WORRY THAT ANY ADDITIONAL TAXES OR FEES BEING PUT ON AIRPLANE OWNERS WOULD TIP THE BALANCE AND MAKE OUR BUSINESSES LESS COMPETITIVE, AND ALSO MAKE IT HARDER FOR RENTERS LIKE ME TO BE ABLE TO FLY.

MANY SMALL AVIATION SERVICE PROVIDERS, LIKE THE FLYING CLUB I AM A MEMBER OF, MAKE THE MONEY NEEDED TO STAY AFLOAT BASED OFF COMPETITIVE GAS AND MAINTENANCE FEES. WITH LESS PLANES COMING TO THIS STATE, IT WON'T BE LONG UNTIL ANOTHER SMALL BUSINESS LIKE THIS GOES BANKRUPT.

MY HUSBAND AND I ARE ALSO IN THE UNIQUE POSITION OF LOOKING TO BUY A PLANE AND A HOUSE AT THE SAME TIME. IF WE CAN DO BOTH CHEAPER ELSEWHERE, THEN THERE'S NOT MUCH STOPPING TWO LIFELONG CT RESIDENTS FROM MOVING TO A NEIGHBORING STATE WHERE THEY CHOOSE NOT TO TAX OUR FREEDOMS.

PRESIDENT OBAMA PUTS MUCH EMPHASIS ON SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS AND CREATING JOBS. WE HAVE GREAT VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOLS FOR THE AVIATION TRADES, AND AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURING IS A BIG PART OF THE CONNECTICUT ECONOMY. WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO BE ABLE TO GROW THIS INDUSTRY RATHER THAN PUTTING IT IN PERIL? MORE TAXES ARE NOT THE WAY TO ACHIEVE THIS.

PLEASE, DO NOT ADD MORE TAXES AND FEES ONTO ONE PART OF THE CONNECTICUT ECONOMY. WHAT LOOKS LIKE A SMALL TAX INCREASE COULD ACTUALLY DEAL A DEVASTATING BLOW TO MANY LOCAL BUSINESSES, WHILE ONLY BENEFITING NEIGHBORING STATES.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.