In support of Raised House Bill # 5466: AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE BUSINESSES.

In the summer of 2008, I began volunteering with women and children in impoverished areas of the Dominican Republic with the local YMCA. In 2010, I took the skills I learned in the Dominican Republic to Uganda with the intention of helping ostracized teenage mothers build better lives for themselves. During my time working with women in this environment, I realized the traditional charity model often creates a culture of dependence wherein women come to rely on their weekly donations for survival. Even though charitable programs and hand-outs are designed to help those in need, they often keep the recipients trapped in a cycle of poverty. It was at this time I began seeking a different model for achieving social justice for the women in Uganda.

I strongly believe social enterprise businesses can help achieve this goal. Unlike many traditional charities, which can unintentionally treat those they serve like victims deserving of a hand-out, social enterprise businesses will provide the infrastructure needed to treat beneficiaries as business partners. In the process, women will receive more than a weekly donation; they will begin to learn that what they receive is tied to how they work. As a result they will gain the knowledge and skills needed to escape the cycle of poverty.

I look forward to creating a social enterprise to help the women I hold so dear to my heart and hope to do so in my home state of Connecticut. Not only will this social enterprise create jobs for the women in Uganda, but will also create jobs here in Connecticut as we hire locally for our boutiques and offices. If this bill does not pass, I will be forced to establish my business out of state.

I would like to thank the Commerce Committee for their efforts in this matter. Please contact me if you would like to further discuss how I believe this bill will secure a better future for the residents of Connecticut and around the world.

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