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TESTIMONY OF THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT

TO THE

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2012

RE: S.B. 89 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MATTRESS STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM.

The City of Bridgeport urges your support to SB: 89 An Act Establishing A Mattress Stewardship Program.

Thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony in support of Raised Bill 89, an act establishing a mattress stewardship program. I enthusiastically support this much needed initiative.

In Bridgeport, we are ready to play a major role in recycling mattresses in the State of Connecticut by opening the State's first mattresses recycling facility later this spring.

In 2010, I released a comprehensive sustainability plan for Bridgeport – BGreen 2020, which is focused on making Bridgeport the cleanest, greenest City in the region while creating jobs and economic development for our City. A new regional mattress recycling business, called Park City Green, which is collaboration between the City of Bridgeport and three non-profit organizations in our community, will fulfill our goals of job creation, economic development, environmental stewardship, and social benefit.

In partnership with the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, Oregon, a national leader in mattress recycling, Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises (GBCE/The Green Team) and Family Re-Entry's Fresh Start Program have designed a business plan, secured a state permit, are remodeling a warehouse, purchasing equipment, and securing product.

Once operational, Park City Green will employ 10 to 15 people and projects to become a profitable business within the first year.

To help initiate the Park City Green project:

- The City of Bridgeport has provided a \$100,000 Community Development Block Grant to support the facility renovation;
- The State of Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development is providing a \$50,000 grant for the purchase of much needed equipment

- The Robert Woods Johnson Foundation has helped with seed funding to cover permitting, engineering and technical assistance
- The Workplace, Inc. is providing OJT slots to support new employees;
- Community Capital is providing a working capital loan of \$100,000 for use during its early start-up phase.

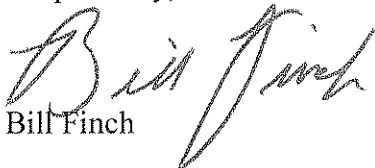
The goal of this business is to take mattresses out of the waste stream and actually recycle the component materials. Right now, across the State of Connecticut and throughout the Northeast, municipalities, universities, hotels and mattress retailers are dealing with hundreds of thousands of discarded mattresses in myriad ways. Some pay third party, private companies to haul off their mattresses. Most of these haulers simply shred them up and then return them to the waste stream, where they are eventually burned for energy. Others simply send mattresses to a remote, out-of-state landfill. It is not only a waste of recyclable material to burn these mattresses for one time energy creation, or to ship them out-of-state, but they are a nuisance in the incinerator and add to the pollutants emitted into our air. When mattresses are being processed in an incinerator, the springs can wrap around the equipment, causing increased costs for down time in the plant and man-hours to complete repairs. If they are shipped out of state to remote landfills, the carbon footprint and expenses are enormous.

A typical mattress is 85% recyclable, if it can be broken down to its component parts: steel, wood, cotton, and polyurethane foam. Mattress recycling creates jobs and conserves valuable resources. I understand some cities and commercial enterprises are paying \$20 or more per mattress or box spring to send them to incineration or remote landfilling. Park City Green can offer a better service for less. Our goal is to have every city, university and commercial enterprise in our part of the State and along our borders partner with Park City Green by providing mattresses and box springs from their waste stream. There will be an upfront cost associated with this effort, but at the end of the day, it will be far less than the health and environmental costs associated with the burning and landfilling of mattresses.

Finally, both partners in this new business, GBCE/The Green Team and Fresh Start /Family Reentry, seek to provide jobs to the most vulnerable in our society – those seeking to re-enter society from incarceration, returning veterans, and the chronically unemployed. The State's support for a mattress stewardship program will therefore have enormous social benefits in my community, as well as the economic and environmental benefits mentioned above.

Recycling mattresses creates jobs, saves valuable raw materials, and enhances air quality. I urge the committee to support this measure and make Connecticut a model for product reuse and stewardship.

Respectfully,



Bill Finch

Mayor