



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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### Environment Committee Public Hearing March 16, 2012

#### **Testimony on S.B. 376 AN ACT CONCERNING THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT ACT AND SHORELINE FLOOD AND EROSION CONTROL STRUCTURES.**

Last year, Tropical Storm Irene took on Connecticut's coastline and in communities like Fairfield, caused enough damage to destroy homes while leaving others severely damaged. Fairfield shoreline saw so much destruction, Governor Malloy choose Fairfield shoreline as a priority to witness first hand the severity of the damage soon after the storm.

Trees down, many days without power, flooding that brought standing water over one mile inland; these are the things that Fairfield residents think of when you ask them about Storm Irene.

The legislature has had a number of meetings to bring government, utility companies and the general public together to seek out ways to better handle these extreme weather situations. There are many ways for the Connecticut legislature to enforce policies that will hopefully protect the safety and rights of Connecticut's property owners.

Senate Bill 376 is an attempt to clarify the policies and rules covering erosion control methods on the coast. This mechanism will clarify and streamline a preventative construction process, using the best environmental methods. There are means to address potential flooding that can offer enough protection to homeowners and the shoreline while having a minimal impact on the environment.

This bill would require property owners apply for a “coastal site plan for erosion control” which would include three alternative options including, but not limited to: moving back from the water, building up – replacing sand where it shifted into the water, or hardening – building new sea walls for protection.

This will allow local zoning boards and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to consider potential impact the construction project would have on the environment, the protection needed for the property in question, and will allow these agencies to weigh the benefits of all options before approving a control measure. This creates a dialogue between property owners, municipalities and the state on the best means to protect shoreline property.

Currently these issues are dealt with via an unwritten regulatory policy of no sea wall construction, which provides no options to property owners to protect their land and structures.

It is my understanding that in 2006, funds were appropriated through this legislature to allow communities to implement measures to protect the coastline and prevent erosion. That appropriation could have mitigated the devastation of the shoreline caused by Storm Irene. However, waiting for studies, the legislation expired and those funds weren't utilized. Now, shoreline towns are forced to react and try to legislate new policies to help deal with the affects of storm damage.

I urge support SB 376 because it's the best balance in preserving our beautiful coastline for all residents of Connecticut and protect shoreline residents and their properties.

Rep. Brenda L Kupchick 132nd district, Fairfield and Southport