



## State of Connecticut

### SENATE

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### Testimony Sen. Frantz in support of SB 376 Environment Committee Public Hearing March 16, 2012

Good Morning Representative Roy, Senator Meyer, Senator Roraback, and Representative Chapin. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning in favor **SB 376, AN ACT CONCERNING THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT ACT AND SHORELINE FLOOD AND EROSION CONTROL STRUCTURES.**

Last year, 2011, Connecticut faced a storm that in some areas was as destructive as the Great Hurricane of 1938. Tropical Storm Irene, which was barely reduced from hurricane status when it made landfall in Connecticut last August caused damage ranging from negligible to severe along the coastline. In my district the coastal towns of Greenwich and Stamford, most constituents and properties survived without major damage but only because of the timing of the tidal surge and the wind direction as compared to the direction of fetch.

Members of the Legislature have discussed a variety of ways to prevent or minimize this type of destruction in the future. During this deliberative process, it would seem that a policy divide has emerged in state government between those who desire to allow the Connecticut shoreline to naturally adjust without human intervention and those who wish to protect their property from storm damage. I strongly believe that both sides need to set aside their disagreement and come to the table to ensure that a fair compromise is established where the shoreline can be defended without taking away people's property.

**Senate Bill 376** is a good beginning to eventually formalizing a solution because it works to clarify the policies and rules regarding coastal erosion control methods. It is a fair compromise in that it recognizes property owner rights to protect their homes and property from severe weather events and to rebuild if necessary. However, it likewise acknowledges the need to protect the Connecticut shoreline from "hardening" by "over-defending" against nature. The goal is not to expand property owner rights, but rather to defend the rights these residents already have while not abandoning the need to conserve the natural features along the Connecticut coastline. This bill does so by using the best environmental methods in a process to allow *some* defensive construction. In part it does this by acknowledging the fact that flooding and storm damage can be prevented by a wide variety of methods.

Most important, SB 376 will allow local zoning boards and the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to weigh different options, consider potential impact on the environment, and ensure protection is needed for a property. Applications for erosion control will be required to include three alternative options to prove that property owners have taken all these issues into account during the application process. The goal is to work *with* residents concerned with protecting their property, instead of the current de facto policy of rejecting "seawall" applications. It is important to create a dialogue regarding effectively protecting shoreline property while ensuring conservation of one of Connecticut's most significant natural resources, our coastline.

I urge you to support SB 376. We as legislators need to ensure that the state government is working *with* residents and conservationists in Connecticut.