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*Statement of Brooks H. Pierce of Sportech Venues, Inc. in Favor of H.B. No. 5095 (Raised) –  
An Act Concerning Off-Track Betting Branch Betting Facilities.*

Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of Raised Bill No. 5095, An Act Concerning Off-Track Betting Facilities.

The proposed legislation provides local communities the opportunity to decide whether to include simulcasting (or rather, display of video) when considering an opportunity to host a new off-track betting facility.

Currently, a local community can vote in favor of having a branch in their town, but then needs state legislative permission to show the live race. Patrons would be able to hear the race and wager on it, but not watch the race approved by the state legislature.

As you may recall, we have come before the Committee over the last few years to ask for legislation to allow simulcasting at our facilities in Milford, Putnam, New London, Manchester and Willimantic. Our new business model incorporates racing into existing or newly created sports bars. This has been a benefit to these businesses allowing them to generate additional food and beverage revenue in a very difficult economic climate. It also assists the towns in which these facilities are located by generating revenue and jobs for the community. In the last twelve months, our five new facilities alone created positions for over thirty employees and generated six-hundred thousand dollars in taxes for the State of Connecticut and those local towns.

We are asking to streamline the process. We currently operate 15 sites throughout the state and have the right to open three additional branches. The current process requires us to get local approval to open a branch, get approval from the Department of Consumer Protection ("DCP") and then return to the legislature for one thing – to allow the races to be shown on television. If we get that approval, we then have to return to the local community and the DCP to get their final approval to include simulcasting at the facility. This last step is largely a formality but it adds time to the process. The second step – coming back to the legislature to get permission to televise adds typically at least a year.

In no case where we have gotten local and DCP approval in the past has the General Assembly denied us the opportunity to televise the races.

It is not efficient for the community, Sportech or the state legislature to have to come back periodically to introduce legislation for the right to televise the races.

Simulcasting or the display of video enhances the experience of the racing fan by allowing them to watch and listen to the race. Without simulcasting, racing fans can only view the odds and hear the race call. Members of the public can view live horse racing over cable TV, over the Internet, and even on their mobile phones or iPad's. Indeed, if you log on to ESPN.com or the website of almost any racetrack in the country, you can view streaming video of live horse races. It has been our experience that states with legalized pari-mutuel wagering do not typically require additional legislation to televise races at a wagering facility. More commonly, there is concomitant approval of televising a race once the state's racing commission has approved wagering.

Sportech purchased the off-track betting operation from Autotote in October of 2010, and is committed to growing the company, creating jobs and increasing the tax revenue it pays the State and the local host communities. Sportech has been a good corporate citizen in Connecticut and the towns where it does business. We have relocated our North American headquarters to New Haven, and have invested approximately \$3 million in improvements in our facilities in the last 12 months. Our business is showing positive trends after several years of decline. We believe that removing this unnecessary and burdensome regulation would be helpful, and it echoes the Governor's call to make Connecticut a more business friendly state.

I ask for your full support of Raised Bill No. 5095, and again thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony.