

**Testimony of
Benjamin Blake, Mayor
City of Milford**

Transportation Committee

RE: Senate Bill 290 – AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT FOR A PARKING STRUCTURE IN THE CITY OF MILFORD

Thank you for this opportunity to **provide support** for this important proposal before you today.

The City of Milford is blessed with a fantastic downtown – a downtown which acts as a hub for the judicial, economic, transportation, and recreation needs of the entire region. Downtown Milford boasts the second-longest Green in New England and Connecticut's largest annual single day event: the Oyster Festival.

With more entrances and exits on I-95 than any other municipality in Connecticut, the City of Milford, and its downtown is easily accessible to those wishing to board Metro-North/Amtrak, conduct courthouse business, shop world-class boutiques, dine at renowned eateries, or trailer boats to the most-utilized recreational boat ramp in the State.

As an accessible, regional center, however, Downtown Milford has been yoked with tremendous parking challenges. The fact that Milford's popular train station, harbor boat ramp, shops and restaurants, Green, courthouse, and other government and recreational amenities are situated within such close proximity to one another, means that those wishing to visit, are competing for limited parking.

If this parking situation is not addressed very soon, a parade of potential terribles may arise. First and foremost, without accessible train parking, commuters will further burden the State highways instead of traveling to their destinations by way of Metro-North. Moreover, the Downtown's small businesses which bolster regional employment and economic success will fade as their customer base struggles with appropriate access.

Finally, the parking and safety issues connected with the overcrowded Downtown Milford Courthouse will continue to trouble those within the Judicial District who have long-sought and, at one point, been assured relief. Indeed, a new parking structure nestled behind Milford's Courthouse has been discussed and studied for several years by the State of Connecticut. In fact, the General Assembly has already weighed-in and initially committed \$650,000 to study infrastructure improvements for Milford's grossly overcrowded courthouse and the adjacent parking area. Then, Public Act No. 07-7, authorized bonding money for the "Development and land acquisition for a courthouse annex and parking proximate to the Milford judicial district and geographical area courthouse." Unfortunately, close-on-the-heels of formalizing the Public Act, the State and National economies dipped, and the authorized bonding money was never issued. Still, the clear need to expand the over-crowded courthouse campus and parking area continues. By authorizing money for the parking structure, the first steps towards correcting the long-standing courthouse infrastructure problems will finally begin to be addressed.

The proposal before you will provide a real opportunity for smart regional growth, and the City of Milford supports this critical public investment.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.