

Testimony of Lisa Tran and Gabrielle White
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University of Connecticut International Business Accelerator

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Chairmen and Members of the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the University of Connecticut International Business Accelerator (“IBA”) program, we would like to testify in support of **HB 6318 “An Act Concerning the Cultivation of Seaweed”**. Lisa Tran and I are dual degree JD/MBA students at the University of Connecticut, and we are currently collaborating with Dr. Charles Yarish and Dr. Timothy Dowding of the International Business Accelerator at the University of Connecticut in researching the environmental and economic impact of harvested biomass extracted from the cultivation of seaweed off the Long Island Sound. We are part of an interdisciplinary task force that includes chemical engineers from the University of Connecticut School of Engineering, Ph.D. students from the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis, and graduate students from the University of Connecticut School of Business and University of Connecticut School of Law.

We are aware that seaweed removes inorganic nutrients from water and shellfish; seaweed also filters organically bound particles rich in nutrients, which combined is a powerful tool in an overall environmental management strategy to improve the water quality in nutrient-enriched areas. This is especially important because the Long Island Sound has a long history of acting as a giant receptacle for human pollution. Its waters are consistently high in nutrients from waste water treatment plants and land runoff.

Additionally, the International Business Accelerator team is convinced that an aquaculture farm could be harvested for economic gain, while concurrently remediating the water quality. We would like to develop a computerized model to identify the optimal sequence of commodities that could be produced from the biomass in such a manner as to maximize potential revenue while reducing any residual biomass to zero. Some of the prospective commodities that could generate revenue include: hydrocolloids, food additives, sea vegetables, animal feed, organic fertilizer and biofuels. We believe that doing so will allow for an increased economic presence through job creation.

Additionally, our project aims to develop a seaweed-based nitrogen remediation in the Long Island Sound. The cultivation and removal of specific seaweed would play a role in removing excess nitrogen from the water, effectively assisting the local and statewide efforts to adhere to the regulatory requirements of the Clean Water Act. The University of Connecticut and its collaborators have proved that seaweed aquaculture can provide significant ecosystem services by removing inorganic nutrients from urbanized coastal waters (e.g. Long Island Sound, NYC estuaries, etc.). Based on their findings from the past few years of seaweed farming in Long Island Sound and The Bronx River estuary, the University of Connecticut has estimated that *gracilariaria* can remove up to 5.5 kg of nitrogen in one hectare of seaweed farm per month.

In order to engage in this project, we are aware that we need to obtain both leasing and permitting approval from Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Department of Agriculture and other various state agencies. However, currently there is NO mechanism to lease water grounds for seaweed cultivation. HB 6318 would be the first step in garnering the necessary approval to begin in a rewarding opportunity for both Connecticut and the University of Connecticut.

As such, we are in strong support of HB 6318.

Thank you for taking the time to read our testimony. Please feel free to contact us regarding any issues with this bill or any related bills.

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