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BILL FINCH  
Mayor

**TESTIMONY OF THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
TO THE  
COMMITTEE ON ENVIROMENT  
Friday, March 8, 2013**

**RE: H.B. 6437 AN ACT CONCERNING A MATTRESS STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile and members of the Committee on Planning and Development: Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB 6437, an act establishing a mattress stewardship program. I enthusiastically support this much needed initiative and we in Bridgeport are ready to play a major role in recycling mattresses in the State of Connecticut having opened the State's first mattresses recycling facility last spring.

In 2010, I released a comprehensive sustainability plan for Bridgeport – BGreen 2020. As part of that initiative, I have been working with two non-profit organizations in our community to start a regional mattress recycling business. This new enterprise, called Park City Green, will fulfill our goals of job creation, economic development, environmental stewardship, and social benefit.

In partnership with the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, Oregon, a national leader in mattress recycling, Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises (GBCE/The Green Team) and Family Re-Entry, Park City Green is now recycling mattresses from municipal transfer stations, hotels, universities, nursing homes, and retailers. Park City Green presently employs five people and when this bill becomes law and is fully implemented they hope to employ another 15–20 people and become a profitable business soon thereafter. To help make this happen, the City of Bridgeport provided a \$100,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to support the facility renovation; the State of Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development provided a \$50,000 grant for the purchase of much needed equipment; The Robert Woods Johnson Foundation has helped with seed funding to cover permitting, engineering and technical assistance; the Workplace, Inc. is providing Step-Up incentives to support new employees; and Community Capital is providing a working capital loan of \$100,000 for use during their early start-up phase.

The goal of this business is to take mattresses out of the waste stream and actually recycle the component materials. Right now, across the State of Connecticut and throughout the Northeast, municipalities, universities, hotels and mattress retailers are dealing with hundreds of thousands of discarded mattresses in a myriad of ways. Some pay third party, private companies to haul off their mattresses. Most of these haulers simply shred them up and then return them to the waste stream, where they are eventually burned for energy. Others simply send mattresses to a remote, out-of-state landfill. It is not only a waste of recyclable material to burn these mattresses for one time energy creation, or to ship them out-of-state, but, they are a nuisance in the

incinerator and add to the pollutants emitted into our air. When mattresses are being processed in an incinerator, the springs can wrap around the equipment, causing increased costs for down time in the plant and man-hours to complete repairs. And, if they are shipped out of state to remote landfills, the carbon footprint and expenses are enormous.

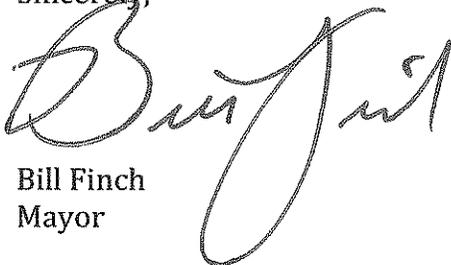
About 85% of a typical mattress is recyclable if it can be broken down to its component parts: steel, wood, cotton, and polyurethane foam. Mattress recycling creates jobs and conserves valuable resources. I understand some cities and commercial enterprises are paying \$20 or more per mattress or box spring to send them to incineration or remote landfilling. And I understand that CRRRA facilities are now asking for \$35 per piece to discourage delivery to their facilities. Park City Green can offer a better service for far less. Our goal is to have every city, university and commercial enterprise in our part of the state and along our borders partner with Park City Green by providing mattresses and box springs from their waste stream. There will be an upfront cost associated with this effort, but at the end of the day, it will be far less than the health and environmental costs associated with the burning and landfilling of mattresses.

Municipalities across the state spend tens of thousands of dollars, and in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars, to dispose of mattresses that should be the responsibility of manufacturers. Other difficult to dispose of products like paints, tires, oils and other consumer products in the solid waste stream have some type of stewardship program or disposal fee similar to the one being proposed today. This is not a new concept, but one that is absolutely necessary to apply to this product, at this time because we now have the infrastructure to make it work effectively. And in times of already strained municipal budgets, we need to place the burden of recycling and reuse on those making the profit on these difficult to dispose of products.

Finally, both partners in this new business, GBCE/The Green Team and Family Re-Entry, seek to provide jobs to the most vulnerable in our society – those seeking to re-enter society from incarceration, returning veterans, and the chronically unemployed. The State's support for a mattress stewardship program will therefore have enormous social benefits in my community, as well as the economic and environmental ones mentioned above.

Recycling mattresses creates jobs, saves valuable raw materials, helps hard strapped municipal budgets and enhances air quality. I urge the committee to support this measure and make Connecticut a national model for product reuse and stewardship. I commend all the Connecticut municipalities involved in this process, led by Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra; the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection; the National Product Stewardship Institute; environmental and community-based organizations; and resource recovery facilities for promoting this effort, and I applaud the International Sleep Products Association for working cooperatively with our local stakeholders to create a workable model for others around the country to follow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Finch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end.

Bill Finch  
Mayor