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Statement by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, CEO and David Ibsen, Executive Director, United Against Nuclear Iran in Support of House Bill 5358

February 22, 2013

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee:

We represent United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”), a bi-partisan advocacy group founded by Richard Holbrooke and Jim Woolsey in 2008 that seeks to raise awareness of the dangers posed by the Iranian regime. UANI is led by an Advisory Board of national and international figures including Dennis Ross, Fouad Ajami, Irwin Cotler and many others.

UANI strongly supports House Bill 5358. The reason for our support is simple: Action must be taken to prevent a nuclear armed Iran. The international community has recognized that Iran is a dangerous and irresponsible state actor that presents not only a threat to international peace and stability, but also to its own people. The regime is the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism, has allied itself with al-Qaeda, and is responsible for the deaths of American and NATO troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, Iran’s human rights record is abhorrent. The Iranian regime tops every human rights organization’s list of leading abusers. And of course, Iran continues to pursue nuclear weapons in defiance of international law.

There is an ever increasing sentiment that the tremendous and unique threat presented by the Iranian regime should not be confronted by lawmakers in Washington D.C., or diplomats at the United Nation alone. Local communities in Connecticut and elsewhere have a role to play in adopting strong measures to ensure that Iran feels consequences for its behavior.

House Bill 5358 reflects that sentiment, which is prevailing among the American people, state officials and the Federal government, that action must be taken at all levels of government to ensure that the Iranian threat is neutralized. As you know, this legislation presents persons and entities with a clear choice: conduct business with Iran, or conduct business with the people of the Great State of Connecticut.

In the course of our work in developing model legislative initiatives, we have found that the specter of debarment is one of the most effective means of pressuring companies to cease their Iran business. Like the U.S. federal government, state governments collectively offer billions of dollars in contracts every year. No responsible and profit-minded company would jeopardize this lucrative source of potential revenue by doing business with Iran. In addition, this legislation also satisfies the desire amongst many state residents to take action to ensure that the Iranian threat is neutralized.

The Federal government has explicitly invited the States to assist in the implementation of national policy in sanctioning Iran. As a result, other states, including California, Florida,

Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey and New York have adopted comparable laws by near unanimous vote.

House Bill 5358 will enable Connecticut to join the select group of states that have accepted the Federal government's invitation to adopt Iran measures that reflect national policy as memorialized in its sanctions law, to help isolate the Iranian regime and alter its abhorrent behavior.

The impact of this legislation in other states has already been profound. Several companies, including the Layher Group and ABB, announced that they would cease all business ties in Iran. The proven efficacy and popularity of this legislation speaks to the rationale of its adoption.

By forcing companies to choose between the Iranian regime and Connecticut taxpayers, this legislation demonstrates that communities and states around the country have a vital role to play in changing the Iranian regime's behavior. This legislation also confirms Connecticut's leadership on this vital issue and if passed, would ensure that Connecticut is at the forefront of the national effort to isolate Iran. We therefore respectfully urge the Assembly to immediately adopt this important legislation. Thank you.