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Before the Committee on Government Administration and Elections
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Proposed Bill No. 6579: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREQUALIFICATION OF SUBCONTRACTORS, REMOVING THE MUNICIPAL EXEMPTION FROM THE SET-ASIDE PROGRAM and THE PERCENTAGE OF CONTRACTS RESERVED FOR MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES.

Good Afternoon. My name is Walter Esdaile and I am the Managing Director of the New Haven Regional Contractors' Alliance in New Haven. I am also the former and retired Director of the Small Business Initiative for the City of New Haven. The Small Business Initiative created and has administered the New Haven construction set-aside ordinance since 2002. It is now called The Small Contractor Development Program. Today, I am offering testimony in opposition to parts of the legislation before you which, among other things, eliminates the municipal exemption to the State's set-aside program.

The New Haven Regional Contractors' Alliance is a 501©(3) not-for-profit organization created in 1999 with a mission "to assist small, minority and women-owned businesses improve their ability to compete for construction and construction-related contracts and to endeavor to prevent, eliminate, and/or minimize barriers to their success". We are very proud of our advocacy efforts in New Haven as the small contractor capacity-building partner for the set-aside ordinance. I have represented the Alliance here, several times in the past years, advocating for legislation which eventually resulted in changes to state bonding requirements and increased contractor utilization opportunities.

Our organization feels that this legislation negatively impacts the SBE's that we serve in New Haven who are registered in the City of New Haven Small Contractor Development Program. Specifically we are opposed to:

1. eliminating the municipal exemption which negates the efforts of local municipal programs to implement the recommendations of their regional disparity studies where they have established geographically relevant goals and strategies. Statewide goals will not be relevant in all parts of the State;
2. requiring small contractors, which by New Haven program definition are contractors with annual sales of less than \$3M, to bid in the same pool with contractors having sales as high as \$15M;