



**State of Connecticut**  
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March 18, 2013

Greetings Senator Cassano, Representative Rojas, and distinguished members of the Planning & Development Committee. My name is James Albis, State Representative from the 99<sup>th</sup> District, East Haven. I am here to testify on **SB 459, AN ACT CONCERNING LOCAL CONTROL OVER COASTAL AREAS.**

In particular I would like to discuss Section 1 of this bill, which allows for municipalities to enact regulations exempting certain seawalls from coastal site plan reviews. While I appreciate the focus on ensuring that property owners have the ability to protect their property, giving special exemption to seawalls in particular may send the wrong message.

As a type of hard coastal structure, seawalls can give a property owner the perception of protection. However, in many cases, seawalls can be ineffective or act to exacerbate damage done during a significant storm event. For example, if a seawall on a beachfront property is 8 feet above the mean high tide and there is a 12 foot storm surge, the seawall will not protect the property. If there is significant wave action during a storm, a seawall will deflect the momentum of the waves into neighboring properties, rather than absorb the momentum like a sand dune or vegetated slope would.

There are more useful protective measures that property owners can take to protect themselves against extreme weather. Building further back on your property and raising your home above the flood plain are the most effective ways to make your property safer. Beyond that, community based solutions, such as living shorelines or beach replenishment are the next best options. In many cases, seawalls should be the last resort.

I understand that there are cases where no other option may be feasible. But the coastal site plan review process, amended by Public Act 12-101 which was passed last year by this legislature, can allow a property owner to learn about other options that may be more effective than erecting a seawall. By exempting the construction of certain seawalls from coastal site plan reviews, we would effectively be encouraging property owners to use a type of protection that might not be in their best interest economically or for safety purposes. I believe that it is important for property owners to consider all of their options when determining how best to protect their property.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James M. Albis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James M. Albis  
State Representative – 99<sup>th</sup> District