

Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and members of the Public Safety Committee, my name is William Dittman. I am Chief of Police for the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, and we appreciate the opportunity to come before you today and testify in favor of HB 6373, An Act Concerning The Policing of Indian Tribal Land.

I have 35 years' experience in law enforcement. I hold a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice and a Master's in Public Administration. I was hired by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation as the Chief of Police, with the understanding that I would move the department to a CT POST certified status.

My intent was to hire certified CT Police Officers to enhance our patrol force. In July, when I came onboard, we had 10 Police Officers, none of whom were POST Certified. As of this date, we have 20 Officers, 11 of whom are POST certified; the remaining 9 are close to completing the requirements for their certification. The POST Certified Officers hired thus far come from various municipal police departments, including New London, Norwich, New Haven and South Windsor. The combined experience of the Officers now serving in our Police Department is 329 years. We also have 7 POST Certified Officers currently in various stages of the hiring process.

Our Tribal Police Officers undergo 40 hours of training per year from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as completing the 40 hours of training every three years as required under CT POST. The training we receive from both the BIA and CT POST includes skill-based training as well as training in federal law and state law, respectively. The amount of training our Police Officers receive exceeds that of any municipal and/or state police department.

In addition to our highly qualified Public Safety group comprised of Tribal Police Officers, Dispatchers, and Fire & Medical Emergency staff, we have 406 Security Officers and 61 Surveillance Officers working in the casinos, with a total of 6,660 surveillance/security cameras that are monitored 24/7. We just completed our Tribal Police substation in the casino, which will allow our officers to operate within that venue. This, combined with our final staffing level of 27 dual-trained Police Officers, has positioned us to assume law enforcement responsibility at the casinos, while concurrently working side by side with the Connecticut State Police toward the common goal of enhancing the protection and safety of the public.

The proposed legislation will enable the State and the Tribe to enter a Memorandum of Agreement that will provide the Tribal Police Officers with the necessary authority to more fully address, working cooperatively with the State, non-natives who commit crimes on the Reservation. We support the proposed legislation and urge its passage.