

State Senator Dante Bartolomeo
Testimony on Senate Bill 639
Committee on Transportation Public Hearing
February 13, 2013

Chairman Maynard, Chairman Guerrero, members of the Committee: thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony this morning.

It brings me great pleasure to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 639, "An Act Concerning the Enforcement of the Prohibition against Smoking on Railroad Platforms."

This issue was brought to my attention by Mr. Stanley Locke, a constituent of mine from the City of Meriden. Mr. Locke had previously contacted current and former members of the General Assembly regarding the issues addressed by SB 639, and given how important this matter is to Mr. Locke, I felt it appropriate to file this legislation on his behalf.

On August 15, 2011, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law a bill that banned smoking on the Metropolitan Transit Authority's outdoor commuter platforms in Long Island and in upstate New York, thus mirroring similar no-smoking transit laws already in effect in New York City and New Jersey. In addition to platforms, the law also prohibited smoking in outdoor ticketing and boarding areas in the interest of public health.

Following passage of this legislation, the new law took effect on November 13, 2011 and gave MTA police and agents the authority to enforce the no smoking policy. In addition, the MTA installed permanent signage at all Long Island Railroad (LIRR) stations in New York City, Nassau County and Suffolk County, as well as at all Metro-North stations in New York City, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Orange and Dutchess Counties.

Although the MTA has technically prohibited smoking on train platforms here in Connecticut, it has no power to enforce this ban without our State enacting legislation similar to that which was signed into law by Governor Cuomo in New York.

With that in mind, SB 639 would accomplish two very simple objectives. It would bring Connecticut into compliance with the no-smoking policy enacted by the states of New York and New Jersey by preventing smoking on all outdoor platforms, boarding and ticketing areas. This will ensure that our commuters are not exposed to the health dangers caused by second hand smoke while waiting for their train.

Further, it will enable MTA police officers to enforce the new law, which, unlike in New York, MTA officials in Connecticut are unable to do here due to the lack of a standing law. Just as when Governor Cuomo signed New York's bill into law in August 2011, our State's transit police would be similarly empowered if the General Assembly were to pass SB 639. Finally, it will allow the Authority to post appropriate signage on outdoor platforms in Connecticut so patrons are aware of – and obey – the new no smoking law on MTA property.

In the interest of public health for our citizens that commute via public transit, I urge you to report SB 639 favorably out of Committee. I understand that Mr. Locke will also be submitting testimony on the importance of this issue. If you have any questions or comments regarding this legislation or my testimony, please feel free to contact me directly at any time.