



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

**REPRESENTATIVE GAIL LAVIELLE**  
ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4200  
300 CAPITOL AVENUE  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591

CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700  
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-1423  
Gail.Lavielle@housegop.ct.gov

**RANKING MEMBER**  
COMMERCE COMMITTEE

**MEMBER**  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT  
ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

### Testimony

#### **SB 1043: An Act Concerning State-Wide Transportation Issues and the Establishment of a State-Wide Port Authority**

#### **Transportation Committee**

**March 8, 2013**

Good morning, Chairmen Maynard and Guerrero, Ranking Members Boucher and Scribner, and former fellow members of the Transportation Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of SB 1043.

While Connecticut's deep water ports (Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London) represent significant economic assets, the state has not optimized their potential. That has been made very clear by *Connecticut's Deep Water Port Strategy Study*, which was commissioned by OPM and published last fall. We also heard corroborating testimony last week in the excellent informational hearing organized by this Committee and Commissioner Redeker.

Connecticut has a long and rich maritime tradition, but its deep water ports are not thriving. According to the 2012 study, imports have declined by 80% since 2006. While it is generally acknowledged that Connecticut's ports cannot compete with the region's larger ports, the study makes compelling arguments for their economic potential by identifying four opportunities for expansion of their existing activities, as well as four additional opportunities for new business. It makes specific recommendations for investments that would improve the ports' capacity and operations, and suggests revising their governance structure.

Ports cannot function in isolation. To attract and keep business, and related revenues, they must function as an integral part of local, regional, and global economies, and within an effective local

transportation system. They also must operate as dynamic businesses themselves, rather than as static geographic destinations.

Both the 2012 study and many of those who spoke at the informational hearing early this week highlighted the ports' economic potential for the state, and the importance of coordination, oversight, and marketing, as well as an investment plan.

At present, Connecticut is the only East Coast state without a state-level governance structure for its deep water ports. I believe that only such an umbrella structure can look beyond the needs of each individual port to develop a plan that will address capital investment, regulatory, marketing, and transportation infrastructure issues.

Creating a port authority may be the right solution. Another proposal discussed at the information hearing cited the Seaport Advisory Commission in Massachusetts.

Whatever governance structure we choose, I believe that it is time to choose one, so that the state can begin to build its deep water ports as businesses to become more competitive. That is why I have introduced a similar bill this session, HB 5569, An Act Establishing a Governance Structure for the State's Deep Water Ports, which was referred to the Commerce Committee. I did not specify the type of governance structure, because while I wanted to focus legislative efforts on the need for developing the activity of the ports, I also wanted to leave the choice of structure open for discussion. If, however, in the judgment of this Committee and of my colleagues on the Commerce Committee, creating a port authority is the right decision, I will support it.

One cautionary note. Given the current dire state of Connecticut's finances, I want to emphasize that I am not suggesting immediate investments in creating new administrative structures. But planning for the development of the state's deep water ports is long overdue, and I believe this is an appropriate time to create the legislative framework that will allow that development to move forward when the state's financial position improves.