



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, Senator Maynard, Representative Albis, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban and members of the Environment Committee,

I testify today on behalf of Mayor Ward of Bristol.

SB 1082 is a critical tool to help cities like Bristol reclaim and redevelop contaminated properties. For decades, industrial properties sit vacant or barely functioning because contamination is too expensive to clean up. Owners go bankrupt or simply walk away because the property is unproductive. In Bristol, and probably many other towns and cities, properties sit vacant and taxes go unpaid. Cities are reluctant to foreclose on their taxes because taking the property would mean the city inherits all responsibility of cleaning up the contamination and certifying completion of the clean-up. City budgets are already stretched thin. State and Federal funds are available through grants and loans, but what cities like Bristol are trying to do is bring public and private parties together to develop these difficult properties. Bristol recently formed a non-profit corporation – the Bristol Property Renewal Corporation (BPRC) for this purpose. The BPRC has identified two properties in Bristol and targeted them for adaptive reuse. But the City needs to be shielded from liability. It makes sense to remove this impediment to get municipalities directly engaged in redevelopment of contaminated properties. If they can move ahead fearlessly, then towns and cities can get those unproductive properties back onto their grand lists and recapture some economic activity.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Whit Betts