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Dear Sen. Osten, Rep. Rojas and Members of the Planning & Development Committee:

My name is Bob Ferrarotti and I am the owner of 9-hole Stonybrook Golf Course in Litchfield and 18-hole Fairview Farm Golf Course in Harwinton. I have come before the Legislature in 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2007 to speak on the issue of golf course assessment and once again support most of the provisions of HB #5332.

As previously testified we, as private owners of public golf courses, are forced to compete with municipal courses that pay no taxes to either the town or State. In addition, we are assessed for "improvements" on the holes (or land) at rates that may range from \$300,000/hole to whatever the local assessor decides. The losses posted publically by municipal courses since my last testimony only verify what we have indicated about the state of the golf course industry nationally and in particular in Connecticut. Several municipal courses have reached agreements with management groups that require the town to pay the management group a fee for running the courses in addition to keeping most/if any of the profits. In my area, the two Waterbury courses recently each received an infusion of \$500,000 each; in Hartford, the City is poised to invest millions of dollars to upgrade the two Hartford courses, Keeney and Goodwin Park. These municipalities see the importance of the open space and value to their people that the courses provide. Private owners are doing it for no compensation from the government, all we are requesting is fairness on the "improvements" issue.

While I support the creation of a golf course assessment category that HB #5332 puts forward, there are two parts of this bill that I oppose. The fact that a municipality may (not shall) adopt the golf course assessment category (Section 1.B) is troubling. It will produce the same unfair competition that municipal courses do when one community adopts and a neighboring community does not. One owner will be paying improvements while next door the neighboring course is not. Also, the provision that a municipality may remove the golf course classification at any time (Section 1.D) is going to have many owners, including myself, asking "why should I commit to 10 years plus penalties along with concessions on the sale price after 10 years when the town can opt out whenever they want"? As an owner I will not be able to insure the course's continuation when at any time, I could face an assessment increase of hundreds of thousands of dollars with no recourse.

This "improvements" issue need to be resolved if the State truly believes in preserving the land for open space and public use. I have been subjected to assessments as high as \$155,000/hole X 18 = \$2,790,000 in value for "improvements" alone. My present assessor in Harwinton attaches a 'multiplier' to my land that the course sits on that adds to the value and consequently the taxes with no justification or recourse for me.

I implore this Committee to help preserve a very valuable resource and asset for the State, at the same time allowing those of us who are willing to invest the effort an opportunity to do what we do best.

Bob Ferrarotti, Owner, Stonybrook & Fairview Farm Golf Courses