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Mayor

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TESTIMONY OF THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
TO THE  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
Friday, February 28, 2014

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify regarding the proposed establishment of a State Port Authority.

As Mayor of the state's largest city and the president of the board of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, this issue is of great concern in my city and fellow deepwater port cities such as New Haven and New London.

Bridgeport knows firsthand the importance of the ports and how critical they are to the future of our state's economic growth. I believe that we must take action; to support our deepwater ports and I applaud this committee for making them a priority. However, I do have several concerns regarding the proposed legislation.

Allowing a State Port Authority to move forward and control City-owned property for state purposes could result in a loss of tax revenue. Bridgeport is only 16 square miles in Bridgeport, and much of that land is not on the tax rolls, which places a great deal of the tax burden on residents of our City. Forfeiting of valuable property to the State, as the result of a newly established statewide port authority could further impact our city's taxpayers.

I am also concerned that the establishment of a statewide port authority could limit the City's ability to utilize the port for future development. In Bridgeport, infrastructure work is currently underway on the peninsula at Steel Point, home to a transformative economic development project on the harbor. This development will result in hundreds of new jobs for Bridgeport and will attract millions of visitors to our city. I am concerned that the establishment of a statewide port authority will have a negative impact on the future of this project and any other potential development adjacent to our port.

All three deepwater ports must be equally funded and equally prioritized by a statewide port authority, if this legislation moves forward and this quasi-public agency is established. I am sure that New London and New Haven share this concern, as well.

Bridgeport Harbor has not been dredged since 1964. This lack of action from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has affected the City's ability to effectively market the harbor's economic opportunities. We are long overdue for a dredging of the harbor. If we want to make the ports a priority for the future of the State's growth, a critical step forward would be to support the dredging of Bridgeport Harbor.

In addition to the dredging of the harbor, the relocation of the Bridgeport/Port Jefferson ferry also will have a positive effect on the future of our port, and also will further reduce congestion on I-95. I ask that the State continue to support this relocation project.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about Bridgeport's port and for making the state's ports a priority.

Sincerely,

Bill Finch  
Mayor