



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

February 28, 2014

Office of Policy and Management

Testimony Regarding House Bill No. 5289 An Act Establishing the Connecticut Port Authority

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, and members of the Transportation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 5289, An Act Establishing the Connecticut Port Authority.

OPM recognizes that Connecticut's deepwater ports – located in Bridgeport, New Haven and New London – as well as smaller ports and harbors along the Long Island Sound coast, represent an important economic development asset for the state. For this reason, OPM, in consultation with other state agencies, selected Moffat & Nichol in 2011 to do a complete and comprehensive strategy study of the state's three deep water ports, including a focused effort at growing maritime industry jobs. This comprehensive study was completed in 2012, suggesting several ways that Connecticut could revise how it oversees those ports.

This bill contains many positive proposals regarding the development and is a good place to begin our discussion of a governance structure for our state's ports. However, there are also certain unresolved issues, questions and concerns that we must raise. A significant concern for OPM is the way in which the bill would deal with labor and employment. It is unclear which divisions or state employees would be transferred to a new Port Authority, so it is difficult to assess what the impact will be. For instance, it is not clear whether transferred employees will have the right to stay at their current agency, or whether employees agreeing to the transfer will continue to remain members of the state bargaining units. The legislation would give significant authority over employment to the Executive Director of the Port Authority. However the employees would have collective bargaining rights which are not addressed in this legislation. The legislation also does not address the significant merit system issues as these employees are presently classified under the statutes. Given recent experiences with the creation of quasi-public authorities, we believe these issues need to be resolved before legislation is passed.

In addition to the labor and employment issues, we are concerned about the lack of clarity on funding for a Port Authority. With no indication as to what properties will come under its purview, there is no clear funding stream for a Port Authority.

Connecticut's ports hold significant economic development potential for our state. We recognize the importance of this issue and the potential for economic development at our ports. While we cannot support the bill at this time, we are supportive of efforts to continue the discussion with the goal of working towards reaching a consensus on the best way forward.

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