

Environment Committee Testimony H.B 6733
Public Hearing Feb 13, 2015

Co-Chair: Senator Kennedy
Co-Chair: Representative Albis
Members of the Committee

I am writing to you to express my thoughts on Proposed House Bill No. 6733 **AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN COMMERCIAL FISHERY LICENSURE REFORMS.**

I support H.B. 6733.

This bill is important to increase the opportunities within Connecticut's Commercial Fishing Industry. It opens up new classifications of commercial licenses, providing new opportunities for smaller operations or operations that are 'species targeting'. It puts an end to the "cartel like" commercial fishery licensing process that has had no new licenses since 1995. It modifies the license fee structure more fairly representing the harvest revenue opportunity, while maintaining an overall "revenue neutral" outcome. It moves regulation of Whelk, a large sea snail of the family Buccinidea, from the Dept of Agriculture to DEEP. Whelk are largely unregulated by DoA, but are the 4th largest commercial fishery product in Connecticut. It will end the practice of holding a general commercial fishery license in an "inactive status" and paying no 'current fees'. It also halts the transfer of Conn licenses to out of state interests.

As a member of the DEEP Conservation Advisory Council, a representative to the New London-Windham County League of Sportsmen's Clubs, (a group of 17 local sportsmen's clubs, with cumulative memberships exceeding 5,000), an active member of 4 local clubs, the American Hunting Dog Club, Belltown Sportsmen's Club, Colchester Fish & Game Club and Quaker Hill Rod & Gun Club, and an avid recreational fishermen, I receive lots of feedback and comments on sportsmen's issues, including fishing. I have received no opposition to H.B. 6733. I personally believe it is very positive bill, with very good changes and with no impact to recreational sport fishing. I believe when properly informed, recreational fishermen will support this bill and the DEEP goals. It should be noted, that harvest limits and quotas are set the Atlantic States Marine Fishery Council, (www.asmfc.org), not in this bill and not by DEEP. Limits and quotas are set separately for commercial and recreational harvests, allowing a fair sharing of the fishery stocks between these two groups.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful considerations on this proposed bill. Please give this bill a "joint and favorable report".

Bruce A. Tolhurst
16 Virginia Rail Dr.
Marlborough, CT 06447
860-295-0327