

**Transportation Committee
February 23, 2015
House Bill 6821 – Support**

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero and members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Ned Statchen and I am a Transportation Engineer 3 with the Department of Transportation and have been with DOT for 28 years.

I would like to talk to you today about bridge safety inspection and the State's use of consultants. There is a time and a place for consultants; complex jobs and/or jobs that require special equipment in order to inspect. The I-84 viaducts in Hartford and Waterbury are a good example; miles of elevated roadway with a complicated beam support system and much of it inspected at night so as not to interrupt the normal flow of traffic on this very busy roadway.

Unfortunately what is happening now is that consultants are doing more work than we are doing in-house, and at a premium. Rather than complex or specialized inspections, consultants are now doing the smaller bridges and small structures like box culverts. It is wasteful and expensive to have consultants do these kinds of inspections.

While we need to do more work in-house we are unable to meet the demand right now due to short staffing. The state isn't filling the positions as people retire. 5 years ago we had 10 teams, now we are down to 7, and right now we don't have anyone on staff who can do complex inspections. In the short term we need to hire 6 more inspectors to get us back to where we were 5 years ago and in the long term we need to hire more staff so that we can meet the needs of the state going forward.

On the whole, HB 6821 is a good bill. However, the proposed new language in Section 5 opens the door to an overuse of expensive, outside consultants. I urge the committee to fix this section so that department staff members are recognized for the skills and expertise we have and given opportunities for training and career advancement when appropriate.

I thank you for your time and attention.

Ned Statchen
6 Bella Lane
Unionville, CT 06085
860.404.2362