



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

### *TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE*

*February 25, 2015*

#### *Office of Policy and Management*

Testimony Regarding House Bill No. 6712

#### AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE AMISTAD

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Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 6712, AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE AMISTAD.

While the Office of Policy and Management recognizes the immense cultural and historical importance of Connecticut's official state flagship, the Amistad, we cannot support this bill.

As you know, the Amistad has been embroiled in significant financial and legal controversy for a number of years, and Amistad America Inc. is currently involved in bankruptcy litigation and in receivership. What remains unknown, is how much debt and other monies are—or will be—owed by Amistad America Inc. once legal proceedings and overall financial calculations have concluded.

The most recent audit of the Amistad, accounting for its finances through 2012, placed the Amistad's total debt at **\$1,499,637**. Since that time, the ship has incurred additional annual maintenance fees (around \$350,000 per year), as well as, further mounting litigation costs. Moreover, it is entirely possible that additional complainants, presently unknown, will continue to file other grievances against Amistad America Inc., adding to its already substantial financial liability.

It is also our understanding that currently, conversations are ongoing between interested and affected parties, outside of the General Assembly, focused on drafting a plan forward for the Amistad, regarding both its mission goals and potential sustainability. Any draft plan recommendations should be taken into account.

We believe the most prudent course of action would be to clearly identify the Amistad's overall finances and resolve those issues prior to planning its future and burdening the Department of Transportation with unknown debt and additional maintenance costs.

In our opinion, it would be premature to take any such steps without first addressing the Amistad's total debt and considering the forthcoming draft plan recommendations.

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