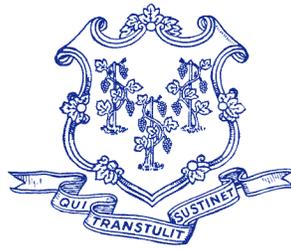


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**Testimony of Senator Mae Flexer**  
**In Support of S.B. 542, An Act Concerning a Liaison for Minority Business Enterprises,**  
**Women's Business Enterprises and Diversity Business Enterprises**  
**Commerce Committee**  
**February 26, 2015**

Senator Hartley, Representative Perone and members of the Commerce Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 542, An Act Concerning a Liaison for Minority Business Enterprises, Women's Business Enterprises and Diversity Business Enterprises.

First I would like to thank Senator Dante Bartolomeo for her leadership on this issue, and for inviting me to co-introduce this legislation.

While significant barriers to success exist for any small-size business, even greater barriers exist for minority-owned and women-owned businesses because of the historical disadvantages those groups have faced and still face today. The purpose of our Minority Owned Business Enterprise (MBE) and Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) programs is to overcome barriers and eliminate discrimination in state contracting, helping these businesses start up and grow.

The state legislature and the governor have created several programs to support our small businesses in recent years, but unfortunately, our minority and women owned businesses are using these programs at dramatically lower rates than other businesses. This legislation offers us the opportunity to help them pursue state assistance and secure state contracts.

A liaison for Minority Owned Business Enterprise (MBE) and Women's Business Enterprises (WBE) programs can simplify the processes for businesses that seek certification and desire to bid on contracts. Beyond that, however, this liaison can also help educate business owners on the benefits of various state programs, help reduce the burdens present in seeking state assistance, and provide technical assistance in businesses practices.

Supporting our minority owned and women owned businesses is a benefit to all of us in the State of Connecticut, as their success and growth furthers the cause of diversity while enhancing the state's economy overall. Thank you very much for your consideration, and I urge you to support this legislation.