

I am writing this testimony in regards to support of Senator Rob Kane's proposed S.B. No. 726 An Act Concerning Renaissance Districts.

My name is James Murphy, I represent Onyx II Fine Jewelers located at 683 Main Street Watertown, CT. Onyx II Fine Jewelers is a family owned and operated business celebrating 45 years of business and nearly 20 years in our current location on Main Street in Watertown. At Onyx we strive to provide luxury jewelry in a boutique setting unlike anything else in the Litchfield Hills. I am also the chairperson of the recently founded Merchant of Main Street Association, which calls business owners and interested parties to action in solving our very apparent problems and shortcomings throughout Watertown and Oakville.

I don't come to this table and conversation with a story about how I've been a lifelong resident of Watertown, memories of how things were or years worth noting of my time here on Main Street. I wasn't born and raised in Watertown, however it's where I find myself today, a transplanted New Yorker by way of Pennsylvania. I've lived a life enriched by the arts and stand up today in defense of the need for this Renaissance District to give Watertown/Oakville, the gateway to Litchfield County, the identity that it so desperately deserves.

I cannot stress enough the importance artistic and cultural exposure had in my upbringing. I played the saxophone for 10 years as a child, graduated from a Performing Arts High School, graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, worked in the fashion industry of New York City and now find myself expressing my passion and talents while running a business in Watertown, CT.

Upon moving here I can't help but ask the question: Where is a resident like myself supposed to take in and patronize art and culture within the Watertown/Oakville area? As it currently stands I find myself having to either return to New York City or turn to other neighboring communities to get my dose of exposure to fresh perspective, creativity and the world. While there are a handful of exceptional small businesses (both shopping and dining related) throughout Watertown and Oakville stepping up to the plate, the success of this town as it currently presents itself cannot lie solely on the brave selection of people willing to take a stance and prove that Watertown/Oakville truly is a wonderful place to live, work and play. We need this larger, branded idea of a Renaissance District to proceed us and spread a message that we are here, we are greater than the current facade of our town and that we are ready for everyone to join us in this revitalization!

Out there in Watertown lies very unique and special individuals with means, who are ready to come out and support their town. This individual is eager to see a new life breathed into downtown culture districts, they want options beyond Marshall's, Dollar General and Burger King. The correct selection of endeavors will bring these individuals out when provided with a product, service or experience they want and are particularly interested in patronizing. A lot of failure in town has been fly by night business operations that aren't offering a new or different service with a particular class level. When incentives and opportunities for the right ideas are provided we'll find ourselves following a model of "build it and they will come". Watertown is alive with those who thrive on art and culture, well rounded individuals who would be happy to experience it all, right within their backyard! Consider the idea that there are many people like

myself hiding out there in Watertown, just waiting for the fresh and new to drive them out in support of the very place they live.

By forming the Merchants of Main Street Association a presence of true love and dedication for our town has begun to surface. Those of us who have banded together and meet to lay down the groundwork for the future of our town do so out of goodwill and knowledge that the future of our success relies on our surroundings and beauty as a whole. We want to see the spaces between our established businesses come to life and merge the past and present of Watertown into a revitalized future, a future Watertown in which generations to come won't know any other way. When it comes to our association we have no problem rolling up our sleeves to plant flowers, install park benches, hang fresh professional signage - the surface work towards a more beautiful appealing appearance, however at the core we need to know that the support on a state level is there for us. At some point it goes beyond all these topical touches and a solution at the root needs to be in place for areas where a fresh coat of paint won't cut it anymore. Our buildings are old, businesses are here to say, some are yet to come and the infrastructure to which our town will begin to rise from again needs proper attention today for our strongest most resilient tomorrow. We have major hopes here in Watertown/Oakville and for many daily livelihood depends on the revitalization this Renaissance District will bring. We long for the day when we see our storefronts preserved to newfound glory, healthy trees lining our streets, beauty beaming from signage to light posts, foot - traffic to welcome at every turn and fresh faces proud of new business in vacant store fronts no longer the topic of conversation. Watertown/Oakville is on the brink of turning over a glorious new leaf, I would hate to see the proposed Renaissance District pass us by, leaving Watertown/Oakville, CT a thing of yesterday, off the map, past the point of mind and saving. We need to be known for something, the gateway to Litchfield County deserves this bill to identify and take the first step towards living up to our location as one of the most prestigious regions of our country.