

RE: AN ACT CONCERNING RENAISSANCE DISTRICTS WATERTOWN, CT

I am writing this letter in support of Senator Rob Kane's proposed bill no. 726 concerning the creation of renaissance districts, especially Watertown, CT.

My name is Natalie Testa, 15 year Small Business Owner of Ragtime Boutique LLC, 689 Main Street, Watertown, CT. I am also a lifetime resident of Watertown for the past 45 years. I grew up on Main Street, in my teens, I did odd jobs here for the small businesses up until I left after college to pursue my "Real Career" in Marketing and Fashion, only to come back years later to the street I loved so much as a kid. When I was 29 I quit my job and purchased this 33 year old business that was failing, it needed to be saved as many other wonderful long time service businesses here in town. I have made many sacrifices owning this business and keeping it alive, our building is over 100 years old and getting harder and harder to maintain and keep original.

I have watched many businesses come and go in the years I have been on Main Street. I have seen little development of our town. What has been developed, has been lacking the charm and beauty that the "Gateway to Litchfield" deserves. This town lacks anything that defines it. We clearly need revitalization of our Main Street. There is a core group of us who have created an Assiciation and are trying to persevere -- but for how long? We could use parking suggestions, encouragement to keep up buildings and make them beautiful. Arts programs are cut in our school systems, new, young professionals sleep here and go elsewhere to do business, our long time resident population is aging, we need great people. We need great people that see the love for an emerging beautiful town as I do, and love to celebrate the history of our special "protected Main Street area" that has the charm it had 30 years ago.

We need to bring the love for Main Street back by offering a reason, through entertainment, beauty, creation, education, and wonderful eclectic restaurants. Perhaps I may be able to even pursue my dream of turning my business into a place for young women to learn the fine art of dressmaking and garment construction. It all starts in a little town like ours.

In closing, I would like to thank the General Assembly and the Committee on Commerce for taking the time to review this wonderful Proposed Bill that Senator Rob Kane has created. I look forward to our town's success to make it the "quintessential small Connecticut town" once again.

Sincerely,

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