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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Senator Bob Duff

March 20, 2015

In support of:

**Senate Bill 357: An Act Concerning The Promotion Of the
Shellfish Industry In Connecticut**

Thank you Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, and members of the Environment Committee for allowing me to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 357, An Act Concerning The Promotion Of the Shellfish Industry In Connecticut.

This bill seeks to support the state's shellfish industry by accomplishing two things. First, the bill would establish an independent council to oversee the policies and procedures of the state's Bureau of Aquaculture. Among other responsibilities, the council would be charged with developing a plan to expand the shellfish industry in Connecticut and coordinating with other states to further develop the industry.

Fishing and shellfish have historically made up a vital component of our economy in Connecticut. Not only does the shellfish industry add revenue to the state in terms of sales and income taxes, leasing fees and licensing fees, but commercial shellfish operations enhance our billion-dollar recreation and tourism industries. Furthermore, several in the shellfish industry are multi-generational small businesses owners.

In addition to the economic contributions of this industry, commercial oystermen have, over the last several years, worked diligently to restore water quality in Long Island Sound and rebuild an industry that was decimated by pollution and parasites. It is critical that we have an independent council to oversee and promote an industry that is vital not only to our state's economy but also the preservation and protection of Long Island Sound.

Second, the bill would also afford whistle-blower protections to employees of state shellfish grounds lessees who make certain complaints concerning the administration of such leases. This is an important component of the legislation, because protecting people who risk their livelihood to make the public aware of malfeasance helps to strengthen both our business community and our government.

I hope you will join me in supporting Senate Bill 357, which will help the shellfish industry continue to thrive in Connecticut. Thank you.