



State of Connecticut

SENATE

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

SENATOR L. SCOTT FRANTZ

ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER
THIRTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

TOLL FREE: 800-842-1421
OFFICE: 860-240-8800
FAX: 860-240-8306

E-Mail: Scott.Frantz@cga.ct.gov

RANKING MEMBER

COMMERCE COMMITTEE
FINANCE, REVENUE & BONDING COMMITTEE

MEMBER

LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

February 27, 2015

Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Testimony in support of S.B. 699 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MINIMUM AGE FOR TOWING ANY PERSON BY VESSEL AND REQUIRING THE COMPLETION OF A SAFE TOWING COURSE PRIOR TO ENGAGING IN SUCH TOWING BY VESSEL.

Good morning Senators Kennedy and Chapin, Representatives Albis and Shaban, and distinguished members of the Environment Committee.

I come before you today to do what every legislator in this building undoubtedly considers to be the unimaginable, and that is to have to testify about the loss of life of a precious, beautiful and very promising 16 year old. Emily Fedorko left the dock on a beautiful summer day last August to enjoy a few hours of boating and tubing on Long Island Sound with three of her great friends. Life couldn't have been any better for the foursome on that gorgeous afternoon until suddenly, in a flash of cruel irony, two of the teens who were tubing were struck by the propeller of the operating outboard engine. Emily suffered fatal injuries while the other teen suffered a non-life threatening but traumatic injury by the same propeller. The loss of life has been devastating to the family, the community and the teens operating the boat at the time of the accident.

While we all know that it is impossible to legislate out of existence the possibility of any accident, Senate Bill 699, Emily's Bill, seeks to minimize the possibility of another tragedy similar to this one. The bill calls for an additional educational component to the Safe Boating Curriculum that includes a very meaningful and effective section on towing, meaning any sort of activity that takes place behind a fast moving vessel involving an inflatable tube, water skis, wake board, surfboard and the like.

Currently, a 13 year old with a Safe Boating Certificate is able to take a twin 350 horsepower engine boat out and tow water skiers and tubers. The record is miraculously good, but the risk given the general lack of on-the-water experience for this age group is large. With SB 699, there would be a requirement of a minimum age of 16 *with* a towing endorsement in order to legally tow.

In my judgment, the proposed bill is a reasonable one, vetted with the industry, DEEP, boaters, the US Power Squadron, professionals in the business, Marine Police and, importantly, the family.

The Fedorko Family has been heroic in organizing and raising funds for a foundation, the Emily Catherine Fedorko Foundation, to promote towing safety throughout the entire country. They have already been to boat shows to distribute information, tell the story and hand out stickers to be placed near throttles and ignition switches to “Turn It Off For Emily” when approaching those in the water. They have big plans to continue the awareness campaign in the years to come – public service without a cost to the state.

Please join us in considering supporting this bill. In my heart and in my mind, I know it will make a difference and save lives.

Many thanks for your time and consideration,

Scott Frantz
36th State Senate District