

Gillette Castle State Park Concession Vendor 2015 season

Testimony before the Environment Committee

**Senate Bill 1061- March 11,2015**

Good afternoon members of The Environmental committee my name is Brandy Altergott I am legally blind and the current concession vendor at Gillette Castle Stat Park. I am offering this testimony **in opposition to section 6 of state senate bill 1061**. An act concerning the fiscal sustainability of state parks.

If enacted this bill would place myself and two other blind business owners out of work, in a state that already has 70% of its blind population unemployed. This bill would also prevent any other blind individual's from starting any other business at DEEP facilities or parks. I understand this is not the intention of the bill but it will be the result.

The Randolph- Shepard law helps me and other blind individual's by giving the first right to operate a specific business at a state or municipal property. The benefits provided by the law gives blind individual's the chance to earn a living, serve in their communities and change people's perceptions of blindness. If Bill 1061 Section 6 passes it will be the first restriction on the law and its benefits in 65 years.

I understand the financial struggles of the state parks as I have financially struggled for five years while actively pursuing a job. Without this opportunity provided by the Randolph-Shepard act I would still be searching for a job. I cannot fairly compete against visually capable individuals, and have constantly had to prove my abilities with 'trial work' before I am hired. The state of Connecticut has 65 state parks only 3 of which are not receiving income from the store/food services. However these 3 parks are collecting income from 1 or more of these methods, parking fees, camping fees and tour fees.

I am an operator of one of 35 sites in Connecticut that you, your family and friends have been a patron of and I look forward to the opportunity to serve you and yours for many years to come. I am committed to working with the DEEP and its staff to provide quality service to all our park guests.

I want to thank each of the Committee members for their time and consideration in this important matter.