

Testimony of Tom Swan

Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group

February 13, 2015

In regards to HB 5886

Senator Osten, Representative Miller and members of the Planning Development Committee, my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG) and I am here today to testify on Proposed Bill 5886. CCAG has over 20,000 member families across the state and has consistently fought against corruption in government at all levels.

It is for this reason that we urge you to figure out a solution that addresses the issues being put forth by proponents of the legislation. In past years CCAG has not supported similar efforts due to our understanding of how difficult it can be to recruit people to serve in public office and our frustration at how the Federal Hatch act can keep so many good people from serving.

However, the level of corruption and the abuse of power in Bridgeport have us feeling that we need to allow the residents of Bridgeport to enforce their City Charter and keep people who work for the Mayor from serving on the Council. The news today's should leave no doubt in anyone's mind. A City Councilor and city employee resigned today after a three month paid leave from work due to a second sexual harassment claim against him. The first charge he was given lenient treatment due to his loyalty to the administration. The Chair of the City Council oversees the human resource department at the will of the Mayor. I do not know of anyone who can argue that this is a good arrangement, especially in a municipality with such a long legacy of corruption.

I understand some of you may have concerns with such a broad prohibition, but this should not have this legislature continue to enable this type of abuse to continue in Bridgeport. I believe legislation enabling municipalities to adopt such protections in their charters and/or exemptions for people protected by collective bargaining agreements could allow us to achieve the level of protections that the residents of Bridgeport deserve while addressing these concerns.

Thank you and I hope you act to end these corrupt practices in Bridgeport.