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**Transportation Committee Testimony
By Stan Sorkin, President
Connecticut Food Association
February 25, 2015**

**Testimony in Opposition to HB No. 6818: An Act Concerning the
Establishment of Electronic Tolls at the State's Borders**

Chairman Maynard, Chairman Guerrero, and Members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Stan Sorkin, President of the Connecticut Food Association.

The Connecticut Food Association is the state trade association that conducts programs in public affairs, food safety, research, education and industry relations on behalf of its 240 member companies—food retailers, wholesalers, distributors, and service providers in the state of Connecticut. CFA's members in Connecticut operate approximately 300 retail food stores and 135 pharmacies. Their combined estimated annual sales volume of \$5.7 billion represents 75% of all retail food store sales in Connecticut. CFA's retail membership is composed of multi-store chains, regional firms, and single store independent supermarkets employing over 30,000 associates. The majority of CFA members are family-owned supermarkets. Our goal is to create a growth oriented economic climate that makes Connecticut competitive with surrounding states.

The Connecticut Food Association would like to make the following points regarding the establishment of tolls at Connecticut's borders:

- Wholesalers and distributors are key contributors to Connecticut's economy. They move groceries, fresh products, non- food products, and other everyday consumables from their warehouse facilities to stores in CT and throughout the northeast.
- It is well recognized that the cost of doing business in the state is high. One of the saving graces of maintaining and growing a distribution business in the state is the lack of tolls in Connecticut. Lack of toll expenses helps keep CT competitive with surrounding states. Establishment of tolls at the border would eliminate this competitive advantage.
- Establishment of tolls would add to a distributors cost of doing business which would cause major CT employers such as Bozzuto's and C&S Wholesale Grocers to rethink the future compensation and benefits given to their employees and investment in facilities in the state.
- Tolls will have a negative sales effect on retailers located near the borders. This will only add to CT's current no growth economy.

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- The state is making a major investment in distribution facilities around Bradley International Airport. Why not make "no tolls" a positive selling point to stimulate future development in that hub?

The devil may be in the details. The unknown is where the tolls would be set up.

Bozzuto's, a major Cheshire based food distributor, currently sends 1000 trucks a week from their facility utilizing 95, 84, or 91. Depending on how tolls are set up, it could impact on ALL of their trucks, not just the ones leaving the border. Not knowing the charge per mile, we are not sure of the full economic impact but regardless it would be substantial, easily in the millions of dollars.

We recommend that a thorough cost/benefit analysis including the effect on the private sector be undertaken before any decision is finalized.

We believe that establishing and commencing the operation of electronic tolling at the borders of the state is not sound public policy.