



**State of Connecticut**  
HOUSE REPUBLICAN OFFICE  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONN. 06106

**Testimony in Support of:  
Senate Bill Number 268  
Senate Bill Number 271  
House Bill Number 5508  
Appropriations Committee  
Friday, March 11, 2016**

Chairmen Bye and Walker, Ranking Members Kane and Ziobron, and Members of the Appropriations Committee: For the record, I am Representative Vin Candelora, and I would like to thank the Committee for raising the following bills:

- S.B. No. 268 An Act Establishing A Working Group To Discuss State Budget Projections, Trends, Areas Of Growth And Opportunities For Efficiency, Federal Budget Activity and Spending Control Options And Develop Recommendations Thereto.
- S.B. No. 271 An Act Concerning A Request For Qualification For The Provision Of Healthcare Services And Behavioral Healthcare Services
- H.B. No. 5508 An Act Providing Funding For The Drug Assets Forfeiture Revolving Account For Inpatient Drug Treatment Services

The House Republican Caucus stands in strong support of these bills.

**SB 268** - While I understand the bill title for SB 268, I think it can be shortened to: "An Act Concerning Long-Term Fiscal Planning". That is the intent of this bill. It seems like we have long-term plans for every policy area imaginable in Connecticut...but not for our state budget. Arguably, the budget is the most important piece of legislation that we deal with, but each year we make fiscal decisions that just barely get us through one or two years.

We now know that we are facing a \$4.5 billion deficit in the next biennium, and the deficits further out continue to grow. Rather than waiting to solve the next biennium, we should be putting in place policies that have a long-term impact and can start

chipping away at those deficits. With the way that we currently budget, families, businesses, non-profits, charities, and the rest of state end up having to scramble to deal with last minute decisions to cut programs and increase taxes. There is no stability and no predictability.

SB 268 is the first step to restoring stability and predictability. It would require a legislative working group to take a realistic look at our state budget over the next 5 to 10 years and to consider policies that will help to change the current path of our budget. No one has all the answers, but with a group like this, we can start to talk about significant changes and hopefully develop a framework for what we want our budget to look like, not just for next year or the year after, but on a long-term basis.

I would like to ask the Committee to make one change to the bill: to make this a permanent Working Group. We need to constantly look at the long-term sustainability of the budget.

**SB 271** – Not unrelated to the previous bill I mentioned, the intent of SB 271 is to find out if there is another, more efficient way to deliver healthcare and mental health services to prisoners. For decades, we have relied primarily on the UConn Health Center to carry out these functions. Taxpayers heavily subsidize the annual costs related to prisoner healthcare, in the amount of almost \$100 million each year. With these funds, the state contracts with the Health Center. That contract never goes out to bid, and we know that there is interest from other groups to provide inmate health services, especially in the area of mental health. SB 271 would require the state to go out with a Request for Qualifications from other health providers, so that we can find out what other options we have. The cost to the state is probably close to zero, but the long-term savings could be tens of millions of dollars.

**HB 5508** – As you all know, mental health issues have hit a crisis point in Connecticut. Mental health and addiction problems are not just in our urban centers and not just in our suburbs; they are everywhere, and they're rampant. The state's Drug Assets Forfeiture Revolving Account receives money from property seized during drug crimes, and those funds are distributed for substance abuse and mental health services. HB 5508 makes the program better by requiring a portion of the money be used for additional drug treatment beds to serve the most severe cases. This is an opportunity to have a real impact on a growing problem in Connecticut.

Once again, thank you for raising these bills and we urge the committee to adopt them.