

Testimony of Nicole Cassarino-Conlon

Opposing H.B 5577: An Act to Require the Evaluation of the Costs and Benefits of Establishing Certain Commercial Gaming Within the State of Connecticut Before the Commerce Committee

March 10, 2016

Good Afternoon, Senator Hartley, Rep. Perone and members of the Commerce Committee. My name is Nicole Cassarino-Conlon and I run a small business called DFX Entertainment based in Rocky Hill, CT.

We truly are a niche market, providing Connecticut talent with wonderful opportunities that they would otherwise need to travel out of state to secure. I started this business in 2002 and expanded to the entertainment space in 2005, working first with Mohegan Sun and then Foxwoods.

Our top-notch performers, production and choreography are unparalleled in Connecticut. Because of our work with the Casinos, we have been able to grow our business and provide great opportunities for these talented individuals. Without these opportunities at the Casinos, our offerings would be significantly limited, negatively impacting the ability for entertainment talent to find work close to home.

My colleagues in this industry have already begun to discuss the new competition coming online and how it will impact us. Other small businesses owners like me are concerned about what the future holds. We certainly do not want to stand by and watch what we have developed be hurt because of this new competition.

The Tribes are asking for you to allow them to respond as any business would in the face of new competition. They are simply in the unique situation of needing government approval to do what every business owner does every day - respond to changing market forces. If Connecticut does nothing, the Casinos, the state and businesses like mine will surely be hurt.

Unfortunately, the bill before you today seeks to delay action on efforts that would allow the Casinos to continue on their path to work with a town that is interested in developing a third Casino in Connecticut. This casino would provide opportunities to workers who would otherwise face cutbacks, and allow small businesses like mine and many others to avoid devastating dues to our contracts.

I have read the reports and seen the news stories. Thousands of jobs will be lost if Connecticut does nothing in the face of increased completion in other states. Frankly, other states have seen the success that this state has enjoyed and now they

want in on the action. I am here before you to tell you in no uncertain terms that if the state of Connecticut does not allow these Tribes to respond to the changing competition and market forces it won't just be the casino jobs and revenue that suffer - it will be small businesses like mine.

We owe it to the employees, the many Connecticut businesses that rely on the Casinos and the Tribes themselves that have shared their success with the state to do everything we can to support their operations here. I hope it's not too late. If we continue to delay, it just might be.

Thank you for your consideration.