



State of Connecticut

SENATE

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March 10, 2016

Sen. Hartley, Rep. Perone, Sen. Frantz, Rep. Camillo, and members of the Commerce Committee:

I'm Sen. Rob Kane, and I am testifying in favor of Proposed S.B. No. 397: AN ACT CONCERNING A MUNICIPAL OPTION FOR PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENTS FOR ARTS AND CULTURE.

As many of you know, I am a small business owner and a proud Watertown resident. Watertown and Oakville are no different from other towns in Connecticut. We have hard-working local merchants who offer a variety of products and we want to see more foot traffic on the streets of Main Street. We want to see more local families and out-of-town visitors come to downtown, do some shopping, supporting small businesses, and enjoying a night out and a great quality of life.

In Watertown, the merchants of Main Street have banded together to support each other and to discuss ways in which they can improve business at the local level. Their goal is simple, and their goal is positive: They want to leave Watertown a better place than they found it and their initiative was sparked by Swift Middle School students. The 7th graders said they wanted to see a downtown that was spruced up and to see empty storefronts filled. So the merchants group started small, lighting the trees on Main Street for the holidays. Items of convenience, like benches, planters and trash cans are being installed. They want to make the area more pedestrian-friendly and improve the parking situation.

After addressing the small things, they'd like to see bigger things addressed. We'd like to revitalize the Clockwork Repertory Theatre in Oakville, and the Country Cinema in Watertown to create a theater district. The legislation before you would help my town – and towns across the state - to establish "renaissance districts" in downtown areas where multiple arts and cultural sites are present. The bill would also provide tax incentives to encourage other arts and cultural sites to locate in such districts.

On behalf of the small business owners of my town, I thank you for your consideration of S.B. No. 397.

Sincerely,

State Senator Rob Kane
32nd District