

SENATOR CATHY OSTEN

Nineteenth District

Legislative Office Building

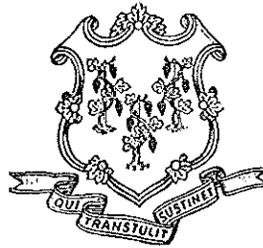
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March 10, 2016

LOB 2E 11:00 AM

In **SUPPORT** of Senate Bill 398

An Act Requiring A Study Of Certain Employment Transition in Eastern Connecticut.

Chairwoman Hartley, Chairman Perone, and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee, thank you for hearing SB 398. I am here to testify in **support** of SB 398, *An Act Requiring a Study of Certain Employment Transition in Eastern Connecticut.*

My name is Cathy Osten and I represent the 19th Senate district, which includes the towns of Columbia, Franklin, Hebron, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Marlborough, Montville, Norwich, and Sprague.

I mention the specific names of the towns I represent because the present and future of Foxwoods Resort Casino and Mohegan Sun has, and will continue to have, a direct impact on many of my constituents who live nearby, and many others in the region whose livelihoods depend on the success, failure—and the very existence— of those casino resorts.

The Northeastern Casino Gaming Research Project made some chilling conclusions in their most recent research report with regard to the weakening economic climate of our Connecticut casinos. In fact, the report states that “many gaming industry analysts predict that what happened to Atlantic City will also happen to Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun once Massachusetts and New York open new resort casinos.” One casino consultant went so far to say that Foxwoods Resorts Casino and Mohegan Sun Casino will be “completely cannibalized” by new casinos in Massachusetts. Meanwhile, plans are moving forward in those states for new casinos.

Current reports paint a bleak picture for Connecticut’s casinos: Massachusetts residents are spending about \$400 million less at Foxwoods Resort Casino and Mohegan Sun than they did a decade ago. Visitors from Rhode Island are spending almost \$200 million less. Four in 10 of Foxwoods' visitors are from Massachusetts or New York, while three in 10 at Mohegan Sun come from the two states. Combined revenue and employment at Connecticut's casinos has fallen nearly 40 percent since 2006.

Make no mistake, I will fight and do everything I can to combat these declining trends. But we need to be doing more to address the plight of our workforce in this region. Senate Bill 398 would require DECD to do 2 things: 1) get good and meaningful data regarding the impact casino job losses have had on the workforce in eastern Connecticut and 2) establish a plan for how to transition those employees into jobs in other industry sectors.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 398. And I look forward to working with the leadership and members of this committee on this bill's passage.