

To the Committee:

My name is Gregory Friedle and I've produced and directed two feature films as well as other video projects over the past seven years or so. Recently, we've all heard about the current and future projected budget deficits facing CT as well as the "brain drain" that's forcing our newly graduating students to jobs and employers out of state.

And we can not tax our way out of this hole nor can we simply slash services to fix this problem. CT needs, more than anything else, a long-term, sustainable jobs initiative program that will allow companies here to hire, train and retain talent. And this concept, of course, goes across all industries in the state but today we're here to discuss our local industry of filmmaking- and more specifically, independent filmmaking.

Now, what does it mean to be an independent filmmaker? Basically, it means we don't have studio backing with their half a billion dollar annual budgets. We are, for lack of a better term, the mom and pop stores of the filmmaking industry. Which means every project that we produce requires us to go out and secure new funding, often times small amounts from many, many people.

And let's be honest, we work in a highly speculative and risky market. So, trying to get people to invest in these independent projects can be a Sisyphus-like endeavor. That's because everyone knows, at the end of the day, our small, locally-produced, independent films have to compete in the same marketplace as Paramount or Disney.

And that's why this bill is so important. It gives our financial backers a small insurance on their investments in our projects. And it's these investments that not only let us hire our cast and crew, those directly responsible for what end up on the screen, but for all the other behind-the-scenes vendors that support the production, all locally based companies.

We're talking anywhere between 20-50 cast and crew at any time- that means lodging, three or more meals a day from local vendors, supplies, trucks, gas for those trucks- all money spent within the State. A direct infusion of cash into the local economies.

I know that this bill is being labeled as a Film Tax Credit and that we've tried a similar program before here in CT. And there were some great aspects to the earlier bill- it spurred an industry here, and trained hundreds, if not thousands, of potential film crew. But there were problems with the earlier program. The language was too vague allowing for loopholes where out-of-state productions could come in, bring in their own crew and vendors and still qualify for the tax credits with little or no benefit to the residents here.

But let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater. With the newly written language in this bill we can assure that Connecticut-based crew and vendors are the primary beneficiaries at a time when job creation is critical to the revival of our economy.

This is not a Film Tax Credit- it is a jobs creation bill for the State of CT and I urge you to pass it.

Sincerely,  
Gregory W. Friedle