



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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**MEMBER**  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Public Safety and Security Committee  
Public Testimony  
March 3, 2016

#### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 234 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LOCATION OF FIREARMS TRAINING FACILITY.

Good Morning Co-Chairs Senator Larson, Representative Dargan; Vice Chairs Senator Coleman, Representative Verrengia; Ranking Members Senator Guglielmo, Representative Zupkus; and esteemed members of the Committee. My name is Sam Belsito and I am Representative of the 53<sup>rd</sup> District, which encompasses Ashford, Tolland and Willington. I am writing in support of SB 234.

Near the end of the legislative session in 2015, it became known that Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection was looking at two possible sites in the town of Willington to construct a new firearms training facility for the State Police. Almost immediately I began to hear from the people of the town as they voiced their grave concerns over this potential facility; reservations which I also share. Willington is a small town in the quiet corner of the state and many of the people who live there now are there for that very reason. But since the initial announcement we have found out that this will not be a simple facility but a major multi-million dollar undertaking which will gravely disrupt the tranquility of Willington.

Please do not take this to mean I am feeling disingenuous towards the fine men and women of our State Police force. Time and time again they have displayed outstanding courage protecting the people of Connecticut and I have nothing but the upmost respect for them. I also understand their current facility in Simsbury is obsolete and in need of major upgrade. Let me emphasize I certainly appreciate the need for the State Police to receive adequate training. But the area in Willington currently under review is without a doubt not suited to host this facility and the close proximity of this proposed site to residential areas is problematic. It is for this reason that I am here today in support of SB 234.

This bill will direct DESPP to construct the new facility on property already owned by the state. We are all aware of numerous properties the state owns such as National Guard and Department of Corrections facilities which could no doubt be retrofitted to host the State Police. Why go through the costly and time consuming process of purchasing additional land when the state already has too much? In this way SB 234 will allow us to exploit already under-utilized property. Furthermore, why don't we think outside the box on where the facility will be located? We keep saying "facility" but does it need to be in one area? Is it not more feasible for the communities of Connecticut if there was pistol training at one spot, long gun training at another and driving at a final facility? By spreading this to several facilities already owned by the state, we can dramatically lower the impact to the towns hosting the State Police.

Finally, believe me when I say this is not a case of "not in my back yard." As I said, I do believe the State Police need a new facility but as a small town, I do not feel Willington is the appropriate choice. But this does not mean I want to pass the buck to another town which may also be ill-suited. I contend we must all look together to find an adequate compromise to this issue. By passing SB 234 I believe we will finally be on the path to finding that solution.

I ask that the members of the committee to support this bill and pass it as soon as possible.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel P. Belsito". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sam Belsito

State Representative, 53rd District