



State of Connecticut

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Testimony
Senate Minority Leader Len Fasano
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
March 18, 2016

S.B. No. 452 An Act Concerning the Admissions Tax on Events at Dunkin Donuts Park in Hartford

Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, Senator Frantz, Representative Davis and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, I would like to share testimony opposing Senate Bill No. 452 An Act Concerning the Admissions Tax on Events at Dunkin Donuts Park in Hartford.

I appreciate the passionate efforts of Hartford legislators to support their city and help address the financial problems associated with the Dunkin Donuts Park project. However, our state is not in a position where we can subsidize a baseball stadium development project. We are facing massive state deficits this year and next that will undoubtedly result in painful budget cuts and the need for serious cost-saving measures. Connecticut has to focus our resources on core government services. We have to fund Medicaid, we have to fund hospitals, we have to fund support for those with disabilities, mental health needs, and drug addiction. At a time like this, our state does not have the money to give to projects like the Yard Goats stadium.

Hartford taxpayers originally agreed to this extensive project because of the promise of community value built in to the surrounding development plan. This plan included a large number of affordable housing units and a supermarket space. But both of these features have been questioned in recent months as project plans have changed. Therefore, the community value of this investment has significantly decreased. The stadium construction expenses have also exceeded the budget by over \$10 million.

The state should not be responsible for funding this project now, nor should state taxpayer dollars be used to solve the problems that have arisen. State taxpayers cannot shoulder another financial burden in these challenging fiscal times, especially a burden that they did not ask for, that was not voted on by the legislature, and that the governor promised would not fall on them to support.

In June of 2014, Gov. Malloy said repeatedly that that state was “not participating” in the Dunkin Donuts Park project. He specifically said “Don’t be counting on us” in reference to the project. In January of this year, when it became public knowledge that the stadium project had exceeded its budget, I wrote to Gov. Malloy asking of his intentions regarding stadium funding. He again confirmed no state involvement in a response letter sent by his chief of staff (attached) which stated: “The administration does not plan to provide financial assistance for the construction of the ballpark. The Governor believes it is and should remain the responsibility of the City of Hartford.”

SB 452 would go against what the governor has assured the public of, that no state money will flow into the stadium project at a time when our state needs to prioritize core functions of government and direct funding to support programs and services for the most vulnerable.

By allowing admissions tax revenue Connecticut would be sending state funds back to Hartford, instead of using the revenue to support core functions of government.

Our state must prioritize. We have to protect the most vulnerable, the sick, the poor and the elderly. We have to keep our safety net services in place. We cannot direct revenue away from core social services to support a stadium that state taxpayers and their representatives in the legislature never agreed to in the first place.

Len Fasano
Senate Minority Leader