

## Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee:

Unfortunately, due to work conflicts, I will be unable to attend the meeting this week by the PRI to discuss their investigation regarding the use of Brainard Airport. I am submitting these comments in order to provide my voice to the conversation. I'm a materials engineer working for Pratt & Whitney, a Private Pilot, owner of a CT-registered aircraft based at Brainard (KHFD), and owner of one of the T-hangers on the airport. I'm also an active member and the former President of the local chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association. As a local tax-payer and private pilot that owns and flies my aircraft from Brainard Airport frequently, I'm very concerned about the most recent attempt to shut-down Brainard Airport (KHFD) so the site can be converted into some sort of "mixed-use" property. The folks at MDC, and William DiBella in particular, seem hell-bent on closing the airport. The facility is an important reliever airport for the State of CT, allowing business aircraft direct access to the center of CT and the City of Hartford, without impacting operations at Bradley Airport. There are numerous businesses that are directly linked to the airport itself, such as the three flight schools, the Fixed Base Operator (Hartford Jet Center), several aircraft maintenance shops (Total Aircraft and VIP Avionics) as well as an Aviation Medical Examiner and several non-aviation businesses. These entities would be the first and most obvious to suffer from the proposed closure of the airport, but that is the tip of the iceberg.

An important tenant at the airport is the CT Aero Tech school. Just a few short years ago, the school operations were moved to Brainard, housed in a new facility, in order to better serve the aerospace companies that need their graduates. Major corporations have been hiring the graduates from the school, including Pratt and Whitney, Sikorsky and others. Indeed, our own Governor has recently been in the news and on the radio touting the benefits of getting a 2 year degree in various high-tech manufacturing areas here in CT, with the CT Aero Tech school being prominently featured. I personally know half a dozen graduates, some working now at P&W in my Department. The economic impact of these graduates must be substantial. They obtain good paying jobs right here in CT, pay taxes and helping to make CT stronger for many years into the future.

Studies have been undertaken several times in the past (the most recent being just

a few years ago) where the airport site has been proposed for some sort of commercial and residential development. In each case the study comes to the conclusion that the “highest and best use” of the site is to retain it as an airport. I wholeheartedly agree. In addition, the fact is that there are obligations to the Federal government, who have supplied substantial funding over the years to maintain our nation’s aviation infrastructure, at airports like Brainard. Monies have been provided for capital improvements at the airport with the provision that the airport remain just that – an airport! In general, airports are disappearing across the country. Mostly smaller airports, but as they disappear the surrounding community loses a key engine for commerce and public safety. Airports are the nexus where business deals are made, and they are where relief comes in times of disaster. As they say, a mile of road gets you one mile away, but a mile of runway connects you to the rest of the world.

Please do not let those with questionable intentions profit in the short-term while Hartford and CT lose in the long-term. I’d prefer that CT spend my tax dollars to address the many more urgent needs that face the State.

Sincerely,

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Pratt & Whitney