



**Testimony
Leo Paul
First Selectman, Town of Litchfield
On Behalf of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Public Safety Committee
March 9, 2017**

RE: SB-957, AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF GAMING AND THE AUTHORIZATION OF A CASINO GAMING FACILITY IN THE STATE.

My name is Leo Paul, I am the First Selectman of the Town of Litchfield and the President of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST), which represents approximately 110 towns throughout Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB-957. COST cautions lawmakers that that any action you take on the issue of casino gaming must not jeopardize the integrity of the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Fund, which is a critical source of municipal aid.

Connecticut's small towns are facing significant pressure in developing local budgets this year. The Governor's proposed cuts in education funding coupled with a proposal to require towns to pick up 1/3 of the cost of teachers' pensions are coming on top of midyear cuts in municipal funding.

Based on estimates of state aid under the Governor's proposed budget, many of Connecticut's smaller communities are projecting the need for steep increases in mil rates, which will impose an enormous fiscal burden on already overburdened property taxpayers.

The potential elimination of the fund would affect nearly all of the state's 169 towns that currently receive a share of slot revenues. It would also have a significant budget impact on Ledyard, Preston, Montville, Norwich and North Stonington - the host towns that surround the two casinos.

Given the potential impact on Connecticut's small towns and our property taxpayers, COST urges lawmakers to be cautious about moving forward with any legislation that may invalidate the existing Compact and result in significant revenue losses in the vast majority of communities throughout Connecticut.