

UNITEHERE!

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PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE – Public Hearing on March 9, 2017

Testimony in Support of HB 7239 and in Opposition to SB 957

Good morning Co-Chairs Senator Larson and Senator Guglielmo; Chair Representative Verrengia, and Ranking Member Sredzinski, and other distinguished members of this Committee. My name is Susan Valentine, and I am here today to deliver testimony on behalf of Bob Proto, the president of UNITE HERE Local 35 and Executive Board member of UNITE HERE International Union.

Our members include food service workers in corporate cafeterias, airports, universities, public school districts, sports stadiums, event centers, amusement parks, cultural institutions, and national parks, as well as tens of thousands of restaurant workers inside hotels and casinos across the United States and Canada. We represent over 8,000 workers in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for this public hearing in support of House Bill No. 7239, which would allow for a competitive bid process for the selection of Connecticut's first commercial casino operator. We are also taking this opportunity to voice our opposition to Senate Bill No. 957, which would provide MMCT, LLC., a commercial entity jointly owned by the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot Tribes, with an exclusive no-bid right to develop a convenience casino. The question of job creation has been a center point of the policy discussions related to both bills.

If Connecticut is going to authorize its first ever commercial casino, it must do so in a way that maximizes tax revenues and increases the number of new good paying jobs for Connecticut's working families. House Bill No. 7239 creates a framework that would allow the state to establish commercial gaming through an open, transparent, and competitive process. Last year, we testified in support of evaluating the true costs and benefits of establishing commercial gaming in Connecticut, rather than making a rushed decision to open a convenience casino in one area of the state. One of the concerns we raised was that such an endeavor would not actually stem the job losses that have been predicted. It seems now that those fears were correct: Raised Bill No. 957 only promises to replace a handful of the predicted job losses due to commercial gaming in neighboring states.

The state of Connecticut has a unique opportunity to establish its commercial casino industry in a way that actually does create new jobs. By supporting House Bill No. 7239, we also support an opportunity for Connecticut to actually enhance its tourism infrastructure. A truly competitive process could result in not only increasing casino offerings within the state of Connecticut, but also adding the hotel, restaurant, and entertainment facilities from which our union has built good jobs all around the country. These are the type of quality jobs needed to support Connecticut's working families.

We ask for your support of House Bill 7239 and urge you to reject Raised Bill 957.

D. TAYLOR, PRESIDENT

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