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March 9, 2017

Testimony of Tony Sheridan, President & CEO of the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut

RE: Support of SB 957, An Act Concerning the Regulation of Gaming and the Authorization of a Casino Gaming Facility in the State

Good Afternoon, Senator Larson, Representative Verrengia and distinguished members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is Tony Sheridan and I am the President and CEO of the Eastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce.

I am here today to speak in support of SB 957. The sight of Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council Chairman Rodney Butler and Mohegan Tribal Council Chairman Kevin Brown sitting side by side before this committee in 2015 was groundbreaking. There was a wonderful sense of camaraderie and cooperation on a very important matter concerning state revenues and jobs. The collaboration between these two organizations is truly remarkable and speaks to their commitment to their employees, the region and the state of Connecticut.

For over twenty years, we have shared in the success of the tribes. Our tourism industry has benefited enormously, billions of dollars have been added to the state coffers, and locally the jobs they've created and the vendors they support have added to the economic fabric of our region and state.

Both the Mohegan Tribe and the Mashantucket-Pequot's have been excellent neighbors, supporting community organizations like Special Olympics and United Way with human capital and financial support. Indeed many non-profits in our region would not be able to accomplish their mission without ongoing and significant contributions from both enterprises.

The groundbreaking by MGM mere miles from the Connecticut border demands a strategic response on behalf of the state and our native American tribes. Much like efforts to sustain the Navy Base we are being called upon to ensure that two of our largest and most successful home grown employers in the state have an opportunity to preserve and protect this uniquely Connecticut enterprises.

Additionally, Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun are two of the largest tourist attractions in Connecticut. They did their due diligence to create a project that will be successful and meet the challenges set before them. They are willing to invest more than \$300 million dollars in our state to protect existing and create new jobs. It is important to note that town officials in East Windsor voted unanimously, on a bipartisan basis to support them in this endeavor.

Without your support of SB 957, the state will surely lose thousands of additional jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. We can ill afford this outcome. This is why the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut fully supports this collaborative approach to protect this unique industry.

I strongly urge this committee to support SB 957. Doing so will go a long way to give the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot Tribes the ability to effectively compete with MGM while saving hundreds of jobs and significant revenue for the State and East Windsor.

Thank you,

Tony Sheridan  
President/CEO