



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Testimony
SB 957 and HB 7239
Public Safety and Security Committee
March 9, 2017

Co-Chairs Larson, Verrengia, Guglielmo, Ranking Member Sredzinski, and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on **SB 957**, AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF GAMING AND THE AUTHORIZATION OF A CASINO GAMING FACILITY IN THE STATE, and **HB 7239**, AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE REGULATION OF GAMING TO PROTECT PUBLIC SAFETY AND A COMPETITIVE PROCESS TO ISSUE A GAMING LICENSE

The recently completed selection process conducted by MMCT Venture, LLC proposes a facility, sited in East Windsor, Connecticut, which will consist of a 200,000 square foot facility with a daily estimated capacity of between 7,500 and 10,000 persons per day. The economic and social impact of such an operation within North Central Connecticut will be substantial and should not be minimized. Surrounding towns, namely Enfield, Suffield, Windsor and Windsor Locks, will be affected significantly given the estimated traffic patterns and attendance projections.

Without addressing the potential revenue and employment issues relating to possible casino expansion being promoted by the current applicant, I believe that the two bills presently under consideration by the committee have placed Connecticut at a crossroads. We are at a defining moment. Connecticut has never before regulated a casino not on tribal land and the bills before us today establish that process for new gaming facilities. Precedent will be set for future gaming establishments, and the committee should carefully craft the approval process to be used now and in the future.

I would suggest that any approval process require a study to be conducted to examine the social and economic impact that casino operations will have on the host community and surrounding towns. This study should also examine the infrastructure improvements and emergency and public safety support services that will be required to handle the additional activity within the affected towns as well as the impact on existing local businesses. This study should be conducted and posted prior to any final licensing approval. The costs of this study should be borne by the developer/applicant, but conducted by experts independently selected by the state. Prior to any final approval, a final casino proposal should be presented at a local public hearing and approved by the host community through a referendum. In this way, local community members would have a full understanding of the proposal and would have a "voice" as to whether a casino should be located within their town's borders. Again, any cost incurred in conducting the public hearing and referendum also should be the responsibility of the developer/applicant.

I also believe that the size of the proposed casino operations will have a significant regional impact. I would therefore ask the Committee to consider a revenue sharing plan that includes the state and surrounding communities as well as the host community. I would also request that a certain portion of the gaming revenue be directed to problem gambling education. As to dedicating a major portion of additional revenues to promoting tourism, I believe this is ill conceived given the significant fiscal pressures on other aspects of the state government.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

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