

**Testimony of Robert E. Patricelli, Co-Chair of the Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth
(now disbanded) before the Joint Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding, regarding Raised Bill
H.B. 5587
April 2, 2018**

I appear today on behalf of the members of the Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth, established pursuant to PA 17-2, sec. 250, and now officially disbanded pursuant to the terms of that Act. I am honored to be joined by my colleague and the vice chair of the Commission, Pat Widlitz, a former co-chair of this important joint committee.

All of us who served on the Commission were surprised to learn of this Committee's raised Bill HB 5587, which seeks to extend the tenures of the former members of the Commission, instructing us to "continue to refine [our] recommendations". You would add various ex officio members to the Commission and instruct this changed commission to "submit a revised report" by January 1, 2019. We also note that you have raised at least five other bills that call for studies by the Executive Branch of several areas pertaining to our recommendations: SB 528 regarding tax policy, SB 533 which calls for a study of state revenue policies, SB 537 which calls for a study of economic development and workforce training needs, HB 5588 which calls for an analysis of the revenue streams of the state, and HR 5589 which calls for a study of finance policies to improve the economic competitiveness of the state.

We hope that these various study bills are intended by you primarily as "placeholder bills" to allow you more time to work with us to develop substantive legislation. We have been seeking for several weeks to meet separately or collectively with the leaders of the committees of cognizance, including the Joint Committee of Finance, Revenue and Bonding, to discuss refinements to our proposals that could be enacted within the time remaining in this session, and we continue to be available for that purpose.

If, however, HB 5877 is intended to be a substitute for acting on our recommendations, we would respectfully ask that you withdraw it since:

- This proposal is inconsistent with the enabling legislation which instructs the committees of cognizance to "(1)...report at least one bill drafting the report's recommendations...and (2) the General Assembly shall vote upon any such bill". Raised Bill 5587 would effectively shelve our report for nine months without your following through on the legislative path that was agreed upon.
- The members of the Commission are all private citizens who gave their time freely. We did our job on time and with great collective effort. Our Commission was disbanded on March 1. All the members of the Commission have been willing to continue to work as private citizens to discuss the benefits of our recommendations with the General Assembly and the public. None of us, however, is willing to continue to work for nine more months--and with different membership -- because the General Assembly is unable to carry out its responsibilities under the original bill.
- Finally, by instructing us to issue a "revised report", this bill would effectively reject our report as submitted.

Most importantly, we must oppose this bill because our collective experience on the Commission has convinced us that Connecticut's platform is truly burning. Comprehensive action is urgently needed to address the state's long term budget deficits and to jump start our lagging economy. Six study bills are no substitute for action.

To shelve the Commission's report would be a damaging, even shocking admission that our legislature is unable to act to address the challenges we face. We believe there is ample time left in this session for you to meet with us to craft and enact legislation, perhaps using emergency certification procedures, which could at least begin to implement the Commission's proposals. We will continue to hold ourselves available for that purpose in the hope that our legislature can respond – in this session - to our state's critical financial and economic growth challenges.

Thank you.