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PLANNING & DEVELOPEMENT COMMITTEE

Written Testimony of:
Heather Somers (18th District)
To: Environment Committee

In Support of: Senate Bill 226 – An Act Authorizing Dual Landings of Fish In The State
In Opposition of: House Bill 5251- An Act Prohibiting The Possession And Trade Of Shark Fins

S.B. 226- AN ACT AUTHORIZING DUAL LANDINGS OF FISH IN THE STATE.

Thank you for allowing me to testify in front of you concerning this important Bill for CT Commercial Fishermen. As you are aware Fishing is one of the most dangerous jobs in the world – In just the past month New England lost 2 fishermen off the coast of Block Island during a weather event where their boat took on water and sank – Only 1 person survived. In addition to the dangerous conditions, our last commercial fishing fleet which is in SECT (New London and Stonington) has been faced with what could be stated as unfair quotas, increased and costly regulations such as federally mandated inspectors that the Fishermen must pay 750\$ for but they are now facing Windmills being placed in one of the last areas they can fish – these pose navigation hazards and will significantly impact their future existence.

In trying to offer some relief to our last commercial fishing fleet this bill in front of you would simplify the landings process of those fishermen holding dual licenses. The bill outlines that the CT DEEP would enter into an agreement with other states to allow for dual landings. It specifically does not address species, season etc. as that would be determined by the agreeing states and the stakeholders. During meetings it was discussed that a good starting point would be the wintertime with winter flounder. This would allow the DEEP, fishermen and other state to see how this new system would work. Ideas such as curfews etc. can also be decided within the agreement of the DEEP, States and Fishermen. Currently, a fishing boat must travel sometimes 30- 50 miles offshore to catch fish. The boat must travel a day for each state it holds a license in as if it lands in CT with any fish over its CT quota – it is fined. This bill would allow a fishing vessel with dual licenses to catch fish for the all the states it has license in one trip and be able to land those fish without penalty. The vessel would separate the fish in bins or segregated areas on the boat that would be clearly recognizable and labeled. Once the total catch was completed the boat would then come into port unload its quota in that state, then travel to the next state – unload its quota etc. until finished. This would not only increase safety of our fishermen it results in less fuel, less crew time and is better for the environment as the bycatch would be reduced. There would be no more fish – caught than is currently allowed - this bill would simply allow it to be caught in a more efficient manner.

H.B.5251- AN ACT PROHIBITING THE POSSESSION AND TRADE OF SHARK FINS.

While I believe I understand the intent of this bill, I would like to testify against this bill in the way it is written this bill could be interpreted to not allow sports fishermen to catch sharks, impact institutions such as the Mystic Marine Life Aquarium and Institute for Underwater exploration and of course our Fishermen. Dog fish is a shark fish that is caught and for which our fishermen have a quota to catch – Under this bill that would no longer be allowed.