



Testimony in Opposition to Committee Bill No. 604, An Act Requiring Executive and Legislative Review of Certain Quasi-Public Agency Contracts and Agreements

Kevin A. Dillon, A.A.E.
Executive Director
Connecticut Airport Authority

Joint Committee on Government Administration and Elections
February 27, 2019

Dear Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Sampson, Representative France, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is Kevin Dillon, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Airport Authority (CAA). **I am submitting this testimony in opposition to Committee Bill No. 604, An Act Requiring Executive and Legislative Review of Certain Quasi-Public Agency Contracts and Agreements**

The CAA certainly appreciates and shares the committee's commitment to transparency. In fact, our dedication to transparency is what drove our decision to enter into an MOU with the State Comptroller's office to voluntarily provide checkbook-level transparency data on the "Open Connecticut" website about each individual payment we make to outside vendors. However, despite these values, we are very concerned that Committee Bill 604 would seriously hamper the ability of all quasi-public agencies to operate efficiently. As drafted, the bill would subject a wide array of CAA consulting contracts to a review process by the Attorney General and, depending on the circumstances, the Transportation Committee as well. The CAA engages many consultants for a variety of projects at all of our airports, and we pride ourselves on moving expediently when opportunities present themselves. In fact, we currently have 78 open contracts valued over \$50,000. Depending on the final definition of the term "consulting contracts," we believe that the vast majority of these would be subject to the review requirements listed in this legislation. The volume of consulting contracts generated by the CAA alone could be enough to seriously tax the Attorney General's office staff and Transportation Committee. When the entire quasi-public agency system is subjected to the same rules, it is easy to envision major delays in moving forward on projects when awaiting comment from the necessary entities. While we are not pleased at the thought of abdicating more of our authority in personnel matters by submitting employment contracts and separation agreements for review, we would still be able to manage our organization effectively under those constraints. If such review processes are put in place for our consulting contracts, it could seriously cripple our ability to operate effectively.

Quasi-public agencies are established to function efficiently and autonomously, and we accomplish this by operating outside of many bureaucratic hurdles that are found in the state system. This is directly responsible for the CAA's achievements over the past few years, from the many new route launches, to the development of our facilities, to the establishment of new concessions. The CAA is becoming increasingly concerned by legislative proposals that have been considered over the past few years that would seek to slowly erode the efficiencies that we have been able to leverage into the previously mentioned accomplishments. These proposals have included attempts to subject quasi-public agencies to standard wage requirements, apply the onerous state agency privatization processes to our operations, and mandate certain set-aside requirements on our projects. By subjecting quasi-public agencies to these approval processes, it threatens to stifle our ability to move quickly on opportunities that are in the best interest of the state and region. Quasi-public agencies are only effective because of our ability to operate outside of onerous bureaucratic hurdles. If this bill is passed in its current form, the legislature may as well turn all quasi-public agencies back into regular state agencies. The impact is that severe.

We have added new nonstop routes, new airlines, and other developments at the CAA airports over recent years. Just last year, we finalized a major cargo development that created over 200 jobs at Bradley International Airport. That deal never would have happened, and we will never be able to spur further development from that company or others similarly situated if our efficiency is restricted by these types of requirements.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Knowing that transparency is the hallmark of good government, I would welcome the chance to meet and discuss other ways to achieve what we believe is the intent of this bill. Please feel free to contact my office at (860) 292-2054 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin A. Dillon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin A. Dillon, A.A.E.
Executive Director
Connecticut Airport Authority