



Testimony of Chuck Bunnell, Chief of Staff for the Mohegan

In Support of House Bill 6940

An Act Authorizing Extended Liquor Sales in Designated Nightlife Entertainment Zones.

Co-Chairs Cassano and McCarthy-Vahey, Ranking Members Champagne and Zawistowski, and members of the Planning and Development Committee. My name is Chuck Bunnell, and I'm the Chief of Staff for the Mohegan Tribe. Unfortunately, my schedule does not allow me to testify in person, I appreciate the ability to submit the following testimony in support of House Bill 6940, "An Act Authorizing Extended Liquor Sales in Designated Nightlife Entertainment Zones."

I want to thank Representative Chris Rosario, for submitting this proposal, and the Committee for having a hearing on this important issue. The bill before you is about keeping Connecticut competitive. Connecticut is a small state and as a result our entertainment industry is in direct competition with our neighboring states. There are some competitive issues we cannot control but those issues we can engage in we should. This proposed bill is an important step toward achieving economic competitiveness for Connecticut's entertainment venues.

As a world class resort, Mohegan Sun Casino competes with gaming facilities in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Rhode Island for the very same clientele. Just last year, Massachusetts recognized the importance of its gaming entertainment venues to the health of its economy and acted to extend liquor service to 4 a.m.

Many of our customers are second shift workers who get off work at 11:00pm or midnight and want to come to our casino for gaming entertainment and relaxation. Connecticut's limited liquor hours become an incentive for these customers to visit our New York or Massachusetts neighbors.

Connecticut can sit on the sidelines while neighboring states attract our customers, or we can understand the challenges around us and craft progressive legislation that allows us to compete with our neighbors and grow Connecticut jobs and Connecticut revenue.

Expanding alcohol service hours is not something we take lightly. We have had a responsible alcohol service program in place since Mohegan Sun opened, and we expanded that program as we added restaurants and bars. Today, we have a comprehensive program that monitors and limits consumption throughout the property, identifies impaired patrons and ensures their safety and the safety of the community at large.

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Many resort casinos have 24-hour liquor service, to truly compete with Atlantic City Connecticut casinos would need to have 24-hour liquor service. But the extension to 4am will at least bring us into some parity with surrounding states.

This issue isn't about drinking as much as it is the decision that consumers make in choosing a destination. What we want for the casinos, and for Connecticut's tourism industry, is for potential visitors to decide to come here because what we offer at Mohegan Sun or any other in-state venue is better than what is offered somewhere else.

This more uniform approach to liquor service also reduces the likelihood that patrons will feel pressured to finish an alcoholic beverage more quickly after last call.

Our success is your success, both Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods Resort Casino are just as important to the residents of Connecticut as they are to our Tribal Members because of our respective agreements with the State. In 2017 the Mohegan Tribe and Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation jointly contributed nearly \$271 million to the General Fund for distribution to Connecticut's cities and towns. From the time that those agreements were executed between our nations and the State of Connecticut, our slots arrangements have yielded almost 8 billion dollars.

While extending liquor service hours to 24 hours would be optimal, we firmly believe that extending liquor service hours to 4 a.m. will increase our slot revenue to the state.

We respectfully request that you advance House Bill 6940 to support all of Connecticut's entertainment venues' health and success by extending liquor service hours to 4 a.m.

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