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**Testimony on Raised HB 7143: *AN ACT CONCERNING THE LENGTH OF RUNWAY 2-20
TWEED-NEW HAVEN AIRPORT***

Date: February 28, 2019

**To the Attention of:
Co-chairs, Senator Carlo Leone, Rep. Roland Lemar
Members of the CT Transportation Committee:**

I am submitting testimony on Raised HB 7143. I oppose the proposed legislation that advances the expansion the Tweed Airport runway.

I also wish to state my concerns on the Bill's language found in Section 1 (a) (b). The language in these two paragraphs is breathtakingly broad in its potential permission for untethered financial expenditures, accumulation of debt, assault on New Haven and East Haven property rights [i.e. Eminent Domain to support the future expansion of new construction, roads, assault on the quality of the affected New Haven and East Haven residential neighborhoods.

The Legislative History of this Initiative to Override the Memorandum of Agreement Between the City of New Haven and East Haven (2009).

Since becoming Mayor in 2014, Mayor Toni Harp has attempted to use the CT General Assembly to circumvent a collaborative and fair dialogue and reconciliation of the issues surrounding the Tweed Airport runway with her New Haven constituents and East Haven neighbors. The legislative initiatives and actual Bills have been defeated in 2014, 2016, and 2018. CT legislators have wisely determined that the Harp Administration must develop a mindful solution with the impacted communities.

Expand the Runway by Any Means Necessary.

After an appeal to the 2016 General Assembly was a non-starter. The City of New Haven has spent thousands of dollars in a legal actions to nullify the MoA.

In 2017, U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert A. Richardson wrote in his decision that the Tweed Authority "lacks standing to bring this action" and that the state statute that limits the runway's length "is not preempted by the Supremacy Clause" of the U.S. Constitution, as Tweed had alleged.

He also found, among other things, Tweed's "argument that it is injured by the mere existence of the statute to be unpersuasive," and that Tweed's argument that "chronically low service levels" at Tweed and the resulting "dire financial situation of the airport" are tied directly to passage of the limiting state statute are undermined by its **"failure to account for the financial status of the airport prior to the passage of the state statute in 2009."** **The expansions have ALL GONE THROUGH. The benefits have YET TO BE SEEN.**

***Nothing that Tweed has wanted has been blocked.**

Not content with this legal ruling, the Harp administration has spent thousands of dollars to sue the State of Connecticut and appeal Judge Richardson's ruling. A decision on the Appeal is expected in 2019. Even

if the Court rules in the City's favor, city residents will still be on the hook for their tax dollars to cover the exorbitant costs of infrastructure requirements to accommodate an expanded runway. With the City of New Haven's Budget on Life Support, it is important to consider that these funds could be re-directed to pay for an array of coming cuts in a myriad of essential services to sustain the quality of life in our community.

The 2019 Quintessential Snapshot of the Tweed- New Haven Airport Dilemma.

In early January 2019, the New Haven *Register* reported that Mayor Harp arbitrarily and recklessly "tore up" the Memorandum of Agreement because the state of Connecticut failed to enact the legislative initiatives, which she desired. Simply put, the Mayor did not get her way. Even more troubling, Harp openly dismissed and disrespected the New Haven residents, whom she is elected to serve, and the Town of East Haven, the city's nearest regional neighbor. This act is one of many that have exacerbated the already fractured trust in the City of New Haven's promised plans for the operation of Tweed.

New Haven and East Haven residents have experienced the consequences of broken promises offered by the Tweed Airport Authority regarding its Master Plan. In 2009, the Town of East Haven and City of New Haven made an agreement that gained the solid approval of both municipalities' neighborhoods, which surrounded the airports. The Agreement called for the development of runway safety zones, but future expansion would not be allowed.

Mayor Harp's action to destroy the MoA was a sad precursor to the formal announcement that the Connecticut Airport Authority and Tweed New Haven Airport had agreed to set up a "'working committee'". Two points need to be emphasized. First, although the CAA is a quasi-public entity, the initial report on the composition of the Committee did not include private citizens, **but state political leaders and local businesses.** Secondly, in HB 7143, the City of New Haven has developed the standards for Tweed's new operational authority and functions. Thus, leaving the public with serious questions regarding transparency and overreach relative to the relationship among the CAA, the newly remodeled Tweed Airport, and the residential neighborhoods.

Tweed Runway Expansion- A Present and Future Environmental and Health Threat

Tweed Airport has a well-documented history of serious environmental abuses, which negatively impacted the quality of life for residents of New Haven and East Haven. Over the years, in public forums and hearings on Tweed Airport, affected residents have reported increased rates of asthma levels, respiratory illnesses, and other ailments caused by air pollution related to Tweed Airport operations. Proponents of the expansion continue to state that the proposed runway expansion will have no direct impact upon the airport's and the residential neighborhoods' (located outside its gate) eco-system. Connecticut.

Tweed Airport was built on wetlands. Paving the runway safety areas will further damage the nearby wetlands and send more toxic storm water runoff into Long Island Sound. Tweed expansion advocates fervently deny this fact. Yet they are at a loss to articulate a critical mitigation plan to address the chronic flooding problems that have caused serious harm to homes in the surrounding neighborhoods. Tweed Airport is presently at significant peril due to Climate Change. Investing in runway expansion is a poor financial action that not only ignores the reality of storm surges and flooding, but potentiates the damages related to severe coastal flooding caused by future Mega Hurricanes. A closing warning- in the 2019 March CT Magazine, the findings of **FLOOD IQ reported that if the Morris Cove Tweed -New Haven Airport was hit by a Category 3 Hurricane, the entire area would be completely flooded!** This and

current evidence of environmental cast serious doubt on the wisdom of planning and investing in any airport infrastructure, specifically the expansion of the runway. A reasonable individual cannot conceive of another planned development with so many disadvantages to environmental impact and quality life that are being advocated for given the State's extremely challenged economic climate.

A Look- Back at the City's 2018 Community Benefits Plans- A Politically Expedient Façade to Satisfy the Legislators' Concerns-A Resident's Experience.

As the 2018 General Assembly was drawing to a close, the City of New Haven was under pressure by the members of the New Haven delegation to demonstrate some evidence of good faith towards its affected East Shore neighborhoods. The state legislators called for a "Community Benefits Package". A hastily thrown together public hearing was held. This is an anecdotal report of my experience.

Note: I came late to the Meeting due to my work commitments

Arriving after the presentation, I was greeted and encouraged to discuss the "Benefits" package. City officials were cordial and requested that we have a conversation about the expansion. My questions centered on a *Financial Impact Analysis costs of the Benefits*. A sampling of responses from various city administration leaders and managers on this topic.

- "We will have some number for Saturday's meeting". A meeting held the following Saturday, which my neighbors reported ended abruptly. **No report on Fiscal Analysis was completed.**
- "Maybe \$400,000. for the Burr Street project. This project was to address the serious transportation impact projected for the expanded runway. I asked where will you get the funding? **"No problem, bonding?"**
- The blatant false claim by the City that the money spent by Tweed for noise reduction is not a community benefit but an **EPA required stipulation of expenditure** to address the evidence-based findings of destructive health impacts of noise levels generated by airplane traffic.

The comments by City leaders of the project were stunning. The brazen nonchalance and disregard for the expenditure of New Haven residents' hard-earned wages on a runway expansion is a palpable and egregious wound to trust in the City's protection of the public good.

The "Community Benefits" package offered in 2018 that is an audacious and disrespectful action- both to the New Haven residents and the State Legislature, which in 2018 was once again dragged into a hot button local issue.

Exploring Tweed's Economic Benefits-The Myth of "Expand the Runway and the Planes Will Come"

Governor Ned Lamont presented a comprehensive plan to meet and begin to correct the State of Connecticut's almost 3 billion dollar budget deficit. His message was strong and emphatic- "Reduce all forms of Debt for the state to gain economic viability. Reviewing Tweed-New Haven Airport's fiscal performance since the early 2000's exposes Tweed as a Template of Accumulated and Neglected Debt!

The history of Tweed's economic performance is exemplified by these facts. From 2000-2013, an estimated \$12 million dollars of city funds have been spent on Tweed. In the early 2000s, the Tweed Airport Authority, which had one runway expansion, as part of its FAA operational plan promised the City that the airport would quickly show a profit. Thus, twenty years later, the myth of "If the Runway is Expanded, the Planes Will Come" has not become a reality.

The following facts prove why the proposed expansion of the runway safety areas at Tweed Airport should be stopped.

The economic forecasting for Tweed Airport was completed before the economic downturn and is based on the old economic paradigms. In 2019, most states and federal planning groups focus their funding on large hubs. The Lamont administration and the General Assembly are creating evidence-based transportation models, which are competitive with our neighboring states. Developing fast railway services between New Haven and Hartford, expanding the runways at Bradley Airport, the state's premier air transportation Hub, and coordinated transportation systems are the objectives.

A closer examination of the 2019 state plans to begin a major ramp up of infrastructure improvements and expenditures at Bradley Airport to attract passengers from CT and its neighboring states displays solid public policy, a sharp contrast to Tweed's plans. This initiative is underscored by Bradley's acquisition of increased inexpensive and non-stop flights to Raleigh-Durham and Orlando currently offered by Frontier Airlines. It is reasonable to predict that travelers will prefer non-stop flights at Bradley over a majority of Tweed's flights heading to Philadelphia with another flight to reach the final destination. With the state's budget issues, there is a limited amount of dollars for the support of infrastructure investments in its current airports. Bradley Airport, as its premier hub, will clearly provide the greatest financial return on the state's expenditures

Members of the **Transportation Committee** need to know that the residents of New Haven have been **very generous neighbors in supporting Tweed's operations**. Tweed Airport Expansion advocates **avoid** the facts on the economic burden caused by the Airport. The Tweed Airport Authority has been kept alive for almost 20 years because of hard-working New Haven residents' and business owners' tax dollars. It is also important to note that not only New Haven residents, but the residents across the state have had their tax dollars directed to Tweed Airport thru state bonding projects. **Four and a half million state bonding dollars have been directed to keeping Tweed afloat.** Increasing the State's debt in support of an evidence-based economic transportation failure is antithetical to Governor Lamont's call to action to reduce the state's indebtedness.

The 2019 proposed legislation on the City of New Haven Tweed Airport's runway expansion is an assault on social justice's principles of transparency, cooperation, and collaboration between a City Government and its residents.

Given the aforementioned evidence and the state's and the City of New Haven's budget crisis, I respectfully request that you do not vote to approve Raised Bill No. 7143 on the Tweed Runway expansion.

Many thanks for your attention and consideration in reviewing my testimony.

Best Regards,

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