

Testimony of Vincent Petrini

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Transportation Committee Public Hearing on House Bill 7143

My name is Vin Petrini and I am the senior vice president, chief policy and communications officer for Yale New Haven Health. I am here to support HB7143 concerning the length of the runway at Tweed New Haven Airport.

By way of background, Yale New Haven Health is currently the largest private employer in Connecticut with more than 25,000 employees located in nearly every town, city and legislative district in the State. We also have the distinction of being the State's largest taxpayer having paid more than \$300 million in provider taxes last year alone. Most importantly, however, we firmly believe that our ability to grow and invest in this state - while providing access to high quality care for our most vulnerable patients – has become intricately tied to the economic future of Connecticut.

The challenges embedded in driving sustained economic growth are numerous and can be daunting. I don't pretend to be an economic expert. But, today, we have the opportunity to explore one of the most direct avenues to creating more jobs and revitalizing the state's economic future. We can and we should extend the runway at Tweed New Haven Airport.

If we do so, we know that any increase in direct flights will have a minimal impact on Bradley Airport. Research clearly demonstrates that the vast majority of those who reside in the Tweed catchment area are currently flying out of New York area airports like JFK, Laguardia, Newark and White Plains. Anyone who has recently tried to access Laguardia knows that the lost time and productivity traveling more than two hours - on a good day - and facing massive construction detours when you arrive are real and they are detrimental to our economic growth. It's not surprising that companies who wish to stay or locate in Connecticut cite access to a nearby airport as essential.

Today, Tweed represents the second most underserved region in the nation. There is real and immediate benefit from expanding the runway – and we do not need to move beyond the existing boundaries to do so.

We believe in the future of New Haven and we believe in the future of Connecticut. The approval of this bill takes us in precisely the right direction. So it is with enormous respect that I ask for the Committee's support of this critical bill to address a key lynchpin in the economic future of the region and the state of Connecticut. Thank you for your time.