



Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers, Inc. Legislative Committee

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*Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB695**: AN ACT CONCERNING PENALTIES FOR FAILURE CERTAIN PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT INFORMATION AND CONTINGENCY AGREEMENTS FOR EXPERT TESTIMONY IN CERTAIN TAX ASSESSMENT APPEALS.*

Dear Sen. Cassano, Rep. McCarthy-Vahey, and members of the Planning & Development Committee:

The Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers wishes to thank the Committee members for drafting the language in **SB 695** & to express our **SUPPORT for this bill**.

Section 1 of SB 695 standardizes the procedures for filing Income and Expense Statements. Assessors use the data we collect from Income & Expense statements as the basis for all commercial valuation and taxation.

The proposed language will create a more transparent and fair process for taxpayers. Currently under CGS12-63c, the documents are due no later than June 1st, yet if the owner requires an extension, they must request it by May 1st. It makes more sense to allow property owners to request an extension right up until the actual due date (rather than a month in advance).

Currently the documents must be received in the office by June 1st and postmarks are NOT acceptable. SB695 would allow a USPS postmark to be considered a timely filing (similarly to that of personal property filings).

There has also been ambiguity and differing processes among assessors in the application of the 10% penalty for failing to submit the required data. Some towns have applied the penalty immediately, while others added it onto the next year's Grand List (billing them 13 months later). SB 695 will standardize the process that assessors must follow in applying the penalty and uses similar language to the existing penalty imposed on those who failed to file personal property declarations.

Section 2 of SB 695 addresses the growing assessment appeals problem which is eroding Grand Lists across Connecticut. CT licensed Real Estate Appraisers are not allowed to work on a contingency fee. However, tax representatives from out of state, who are not CT licensed Real Estate Appraisers, are filing mass assessment appeals and working on a contingency fee basis. Because they are paid based on their outcome, we strongly believe their opinion cannot be unbiased. Additionally, by flooding the courts with appeals, municipalities are forced to either engage in very costly trials or offer settlements even when they are not warranted. Either choice is paid with public funds and unwarranted assessment reductions lead to a lack of uniformity and fairness across the board.

SB 695 enhances the Income and expense submission process for commercial property owners and addresses the loophole allowing expert testimony to be compromised by offering a larger fee for a larger reduction.

The CAAO sincerely appreciates the efforts in drafting SB 695 and hopes to see it voted out of your committee.

Respectfully,

John Chaponis & Jennifer Lineaweaver
Legislative Chairman, Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers