



**Mashantucket Pequot
Tribal Nation**

**Testimony of Rodney Butler, Chairman
Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation
To the Public Health Committee
February 8, 2021**

**SB 326 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES,
TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND
VAPOR PRODUCTS**

Dear Distinguished Members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Rodney Butler and I am writing to you today as the proud Chairman of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, which employs thousands of team members and enjoys the company of millions of patrons annually at Foxwoods Resort Casino.

I regret having to reach out to you today regarding a potential amendment to a bill (SB 326) that we were not afforded the opportunity to testify on, let alone see. We were alerted to the potential amendment thanks to the strong representation of many members serving on this committee. As the leader of a sovereign nation, I hope you can appreciate how troubling this development might be as it calls into question our nation's unwavering commitment to the health and safety of our tribal members, our employees and our patrons.

This committee, on this very issue, has developed a deep understanding and appreciation of the tribal-state relationship. Our agreements with the state represent modern-day treaties and they are regarded by our nation with the same amount of reverence. American history has not been kind in its treatment to Native American people, nor has government always proven honorable in its commitment to the various agreements executed with indigenous populations.

In spite of that reality, in 2009, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation entered into a voluntary government-to-government agreement with the State of Connecticut under the leadership Governor M. Jodi Rell concerning smoking and non-smoking areas and policies in our gaming facilities. At the time of signing, our tribal leadership noted the agreement's recognition of the principles of sovereignty, most particularly the values of government-to-government communication and respect embodied by the agreement. Those principles and values must always guide the tribal-state relationship. Thus, if the state seeks to revisit the standards set forth in our 2009 agreement, such action should occur through sovereign-to-sovereign discussions, not on the basis of an unseen amendment to an unrelated bill that has not had the benefit of a transparent process.

Assuring that history does not repeat itself is a fundamental responsibility of the office I hold as Chairman, and the vantage point through which I'm obligated to view any new negotiations with the state. I hope you will respect the sanctity of our agreement with the state and reject the call for an amendment of this kind on any proposed legislation. Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions.

Rodney Butler | Chairman

MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT TRIBAL NATION

P.O. Box 3060, Mashantucket, CT 06338-3060

T:[860.396.6133](tel:860.396.6133) | rodneybutler@mptn-nsn.gov

mashantucket.com | foxwoods.com