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State of Connecticut
SENATE

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER PRO TEMPORE

RANKING MEMBER
ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
EXEC. & LEGIS. NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

MEMBER
FINANCE, REVENUE & BONDING COMMITTEE

Testimony

Transportation Committee Public Hearing

February 19, 2021

In Support of Senate Bills 241, 605, 610 and 866 on the Connecticut Port Authority

Chairs Lemar and Cassano, Ranking Members Somers and Carney, and the distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, I am Sen. Paul Formica, and I am here to testify today in support of this committee's increased participation in the oversight of the Connecticut Port Authority (CPA.) Specifically, a drafting of a bill that includes language taken from the intentions of Proposed Bills 241, 605, 610 and 866, all of which are contemplated to, at the very least, create more oversight and increased reporting by the CPA board and/or move to a new model and direction.

As a former Co-Chair and now Ranking Member of the Energy and Technology Committee, one of the many focuses that the committee has, which is a critical responsibility, is the facilitation of the necessary generation of power sources to meet the state's growing energy demand as well as making that electricity as sustainable, practical and affordable as possible.

I believe off shore wind development is an important part of this discussion as it is getting an industry foothold here in Connecticut utilizing both the ports of New London and Bridgeport.

The CPA was created in 2016 to help our large and small ports achieve their best economic potential. Unfortunately, the problems surrounding the management's "indiscretions" early on have, and are continuing to have, a negative effect on achieving this mission.

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There have been many concerns regarding the CPA's behavior. While I believe that the current leadership is working diligently to reverse the misdeeds of the past, revelations continue to suggest that problems of the past linger, and some changes need to be made.

Just recently, the Connecticut Contracting and Standards Board released information on excessive finder's fee payments to a vendor that they found after reviewing CPA activities.

As this committee considers the next best option, I believe working in association with the current management of the CPA and the Contracting and Standards Board to review all past contracts for services and vendors negotiated previously by the CPA. Also, working with the Office of Policy and Management in their role as a fiscal watchdog of the agency will ensure that the port renovations are managed with a keen eye and all matters are part of the public process.

Additionally, a continued focus should be on Connecticut's small port success as this is a key economic driver for our state.

The host city agreement for the city of New London should be completed quickly as the New London State Pier is critical to Connecticut's economic recovery and New London's voice is crucial to the CPA's board conversation.

The CPA's past needs a thorough review and necessary steps must be taken so that the economic success of Connecticut ports is the story, not the continuing past problems of CPA oversight.

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Thank you for your continued support,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Formica", enclosed within a large, loopy oval flourish.

Paul M. Formica
State Senator, 20th district