

# City of New London

## Office of the Mayor

181 State Street • New London, CT 06320 • Phone (860) 447-5201 • Fax (860) 447-7971

### **In support of raised Senate Bill's 866, 605,610, 241, & House Bill 5423**

Transportation Committee

February 19<sup>th</sup> 2021

Michael Passero, Mayor of New London

Representative Lemar, Senator Cassano and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify with regard to the four bills related to the Connecticut Port Authority (CPA) that are on your agenda today.

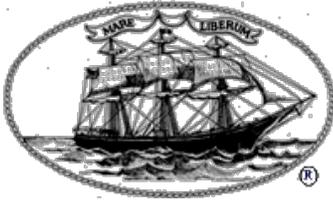
The proposed requirement in Senate Bill 866, mandating that the CPA submit an annual report is good public policy. Over the short history of that agency, its lack of transparency has been its hallmark. Resolving that issue is of primary importance, especially to the host city since we have been especially impacted by the activities of the CPA. More robust public oversight is necessary and perhaps requiring and scrutinizing the proposed annual report of the agency would be a start.

The bill does not, however, solve the problem of this troubled agency running roughshod over the City of New London. For example, the CPA has unilaterally decided that greater economic benefits for the region and the State promised from its port redevelopment project justify sacrificing city jobs and businesses. The CPA is unilaterally ignoring the Municipal Development Plan that regulates development of the State Pier property and recognizes the role of the City in those decisions. The MDP is a binding agreement between the City and the State and it requires the consent of both parties to dissolve the agreement. Despite the existence of the MDP, the City has had no voice in the CPA's decisions that have directly impacted the city that hosts the only property owned by the CPA and the only property that generates the CPA's revenues.

With regard to Senate Bill 605, I thank Senator Somers and Carney for including the provision that would give the City of New London a voice on the CPA board. However, I would ask that rather than a representative for the City who is appointed by the Governor, the legislation should provide for a seat for the chief elected official. That would ensure that the seat is held by someone who has been elected to speak for the residents of the host city. The Governor already has numerous appointments to this board. Appointing the CEO of the City as an ex officio member of the Board is consistent with the Board membership design of the original legislation that provides for other ex officio members, including the independently elected State Treasurer, a Constitution Officer.

Similarly, New London also strongly supports Senate Bill 610, that simply provides for adding the CEO of the city of New London to the Board. Had that appointment been included in the original legislation, I believe the CPA would not have had such a dysfunctional start and perhaps the agency's reputation would not be so tarnished as we sit here today. The local knowledge the City could have provided would have been invaluable to the Board's decision-making processes. Had New London been able to provide its local perspective mistakes might have been avoided. The costliest of those mistakes is the collapse of the initial \$97 million design. With the failure of the CPA's arrogant assumption that it would be allowed to disrupt the operation of Cross Sound Ferry, the project budget ballooned to \$157 million to redesign the proposed facility.

The final bill regarding the CPA before you today is Proposed Senate Bill No. 241. The City thanks the sponsors from Southeastern Connecticut for proposing this legislation. While it does not directly resolve many of the negative impacts of the CPA on the host city, we support the goals of the proposed legislation. With regard to the proposal to review the



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representation of host cities on the Boards of quasi-public agencies, in this case there is only one host city, New London. The City appreciates the CPA's support, expressed in earlier testimony today, for New London having a seat on its Board. However, we have seen little or no actual effort to help see that goal achieved during the more than two years since the commitment was made by the Governor's then Chief of Staff, Ryan Drajewicz. The City would encourage the legislature to support the promise of the Governor and the recommendation of the CPA to provide for a seat on the Board for the Chief Elected Official of the host city. We disagree with the suggestion of Mr. Henshaw during his testimony that the level of the "impact fees" provided to the city are somehow fair or adequate. We strongly disagree with Mr. Kooris understating the loss in jobs to New London. He is not including the parttime longshoremen jobs that were necessary every time a ship arrived in the harbor or all the supply stream jobs including work for harbor pilots, tugs, truckers, etc. Requiring the CPA is producing the data to back up its claims is needed. The City shared the general enthusiasm that surrounded the creation of the agency, as referenced earlier today by Representative Lemar, but with the numerous failures of this agency, at this point, the City is prepared to support this proposed legislation's provision to study transferring the duties of the CPA back to the Department of Transportation.

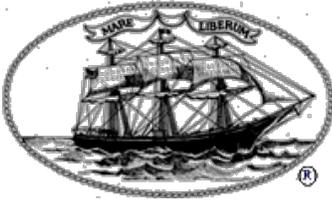
I have also submitted written testimony in support of House Bill 5423, An Act Concerning the Expansion of Passenger Train and Ground Transportation Services in Eastern Connecticut. New London strongly supports expansion of commuter rail service east of New London, where it currently terminates, thereby connecting the city and state with the rail system in RI and beyond.

I thank you again for this opportunity and I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee might have. I would also encourage any of you to please reach out to me outside of this hearing if you would like to hear more about the City's experience with this agency since its inception.

Respectfully,

Respectfully,  
Michael E. Passero





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