



**Charlie Strickland, "Two Bears",
Chairman and Justice of the Mohegan Tribes Council of Elders.
Transportation Committee, February 27, 2023**

H.B. No. 5503 AN ACT RENAMING THE THAMES RIVER AS THE PEQUOT RIVER

Senators Cohen and Hwang, Representative Lamar and Kennedy and honorable members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Charlie Strickland, "Two Bears," Chairman and Justice of the Mohegan Tribes Council of Elders. The Council of Elders is responsible for overseeing judicial matters and the Tribe's cultural integrity, possessing legislative powers specifically granted by our Tribe's Constitution in order to provide guidance on Tribal cultural matters and enforce rules of Tribal custom.

I am submitting testimony today on Proposed Bill H.B. No. 5503 AN ACT RENAMING THE THAMES RIVER AS THE PEQUOT RIVER. We understand the intent of this legislation, and appreciate that members of the General Assembly are attempting to correct a perceived historical wrong. However, the river – which The Mohegan Tribe has historically called the Massapequotuck – runs adjacent to our homeland. It has been the lifeblood of our tribe for centuries. and has had many other names throughout its history: Mohegan, Pequot, Mohegan-Pequot, and now Thames, but it always provided our ancestors with food, transportation and the shells used for our wampum. We appreciate that there is consideration given to this historical significance once again.

This river is adjacent to the Mohegan's current reservation, as well as our active burial ground. As such, **we oppose the renaming of the river to the Pequot River, for what we hope are self-evident reasons.**

Additionally, this legislation proposes a name for the river based on a European map that was created in a moment in time. There are many European maps that show a variety of names, and I have attached one such map from 1630 that shows the name as the Mohegan-Pequot River, as just one example.

In the spirit of cooperation, we have reached out to our neighbors at the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation in the hope of discussing a traditional name that would be agreeable to *both* of Connecticut's federally recognized tribes. While such a name has not been identified at this time, we remain open to such a discussion which might inform the General Assembly's work this session.

THE MOHEGAN TRIBE



13 Crow Hill Road • Uncasville, CT 06382 • Telephone (860) 862-6100

The Mohegan culture is centered around collaboration, respect, and working together. I hope my testimony today sheds light on what the unintended consequences of this bill will be. We believe the two tribes should come together and work in mutual respect with the goal of agreeing on a suggested name. Only then do we believe that the State of Connecticut's legislative body can make an informed and culturally sensitive decision that is respectful to both Tribes.

Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

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HISTORY
 OF THE
 INDIANS OF CONNECTICUT

FROM THE
 EARLIEST KNOWN PERIOD
 TO 1850.

By JOHN W. DE FOREST.

PUBLISHED WITH THE SANCTION OF THE
 CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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"Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music. The joy of our hearts is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning."—LAMENTATIONS, CHAPTER V.

HARTFORD:
 WM. JAS. HAMERSLEY.

1851.

