

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5202

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT

Title: AIRPORT AUTHORITY.

Vote Date: 3/20/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/26/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The Connecticut Airport Authority (CAA) has expressed recommendations to hopefully benefit airports within the state. The recommendations they speak of, hope to solve the issue of laser projections around aircrafts, which can pose a danger to pilots. To better prepare vertical-takeoff and landing aircrafts' anticipated mainstream usage in coming years, as well as addressing regulations and safety concerns regarding the operation unmanned aircraft, as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has provided more leeway to states. The bill also hopes to help with the CAA's recommendations to shift the hours of alcohol sales at Bradley International Airport (BDL) for better align with concessionaires and ultimately allow more passengers to purchase alcohol before their flights.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Kevin Dillon, Executive Director, Connecticut Airport Authority (CAA)

Mr. Dillon testified that the Connecticut Airport Authority seek to prepare for the future of aviation in Connecticut. In anticipation of vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft becoming mainstream in the future, they seek to incorporate them and vertiports into existing aeronautics statutes. Even though these aircraft are in testing stages, Mr. Dillon testified that other states have been constructing vertiports to prepare for a future of VTOL aircraft, and Connecticut should prepare and coordinate developments as well.

Additionally, as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has allowed states more leeway to regulate unmanned aircraft activities, the CAA seeks to provide regulations and safety

initiatives for the operation of such aircraft. Mr. Dillon testified that they consulted with the FAA about their proposals, which include prohibiting the weaponization of unmanned aircraft, flying less than 250 over private property without consent, flying by critical infrastructure without approval, and incorporating unmanned aircraft into CAA regulatory authority.

Mr. Dillon also testified that they sought to deter individuals projecting lasers at aircraft, as there were 13,304 reported incidents of such nationwide last year. Projecting lasers at aircraft pose dangers to pilots if the lasers reach the cockpit.

Finally, Mr. Dillon testified that by shifting the alcohol sale window at BDL up two hours, from 6am-1am to 4am-11pm, they can align their alcohol sale window to match concessionaires' hours and take advantage of the high passenger traffic in the early morning.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Supriyo Chatterjee, West Hartford

Mr. Chatterjee testifies that as major manufacturing companies announce large, unmanned self-flying aircraft models, acknowledging unmanned aircraft in state statutes harmonize their development. He also testifies that while current FAA structure can manage advanced air mobility operations, states should update their statutes as the FAA updates their efforts. He recommends that federal documentation regarding vertiports and advanced air mobility be considered before enacting state statutes.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Mike Smitsky, Vice President – Government Affairs, Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International

Mr. Smitsky opposes sections 22 and 23 of HB 5202. He testifies that these sections, which prohibit unmanned aircraft from being flying 250 feet or lower over private premises without authorization and prohibiting flight by critical infrastructure, contradict federal law providing the FAA authority to exclusive authority to regulate low altitude aircraft and the airspace. Mr. Smitsky acknowledges that regulation is permitted when the reasonable use of unmanned aircraft would not be permitted but believes these regulations would severely restrict the operation of these aircraft. He also testifies that regulating flights around or over critical infrastructure would create a no-fly zone and is overly broad and should instead focus on surveillance as opposed to a simple flight by a building.

Reported by: Adithya Saranathan

Date: 4/3/24