



Statement of Jen Kawecki, Executive Director
CT Marine Trades Association
Appropriations Committee
House Bill 5047
March 15, 2024

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthal, Representative Nuccio and members of the committee:

My name is Jen Kawecki. I serve as executive director for the Connecticut Marine Trades Association (CMTA).

I am representing CMTA today to offer comments on House Bill 5047, *An Act Implementing the Governor's Recommendations for General Government*. I will confine my comments to provisions relating to the Connecticut Port Authority (CPA). At the conclusion of my statement is an update on the issue of dredging.

Right now, the Connecticut Port Authority serves as the main conduit to the state's maritime economy and commerce. The recreational boating sector, with our marinas and water-dependent businesses, is a significant part of that. Subsuming the CPA into the Connecticut Airport Authority could lose that laser focus.

The Connecticut Airport Authority's executive director and board of directors would oversee a renamed CT Maritime Authority. We wonder if that really makes sense. They already have major responsibilities for ensuring the safe and cost-effective operation of Bradley International Airport and five general aviation airports. Foisting a new portfolio of maritime commerce upon them seems to be inappropriate.

The CT Port Authority has been designated a lead entity to develop a plan with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to enable dredging in our waterways, harbors and marinas. Without dredging, the maritime economy will come to a screeching halt. This is not the time to turn this vital matter over to an entity that has little or no interest or expertise in it.

For these reasons, and others, the Connecticut Marine Trades Association would ask that you keep the Connecticut Port Authority where it is right now as a standalone entity; our maritime economy will benefit as a result. Thank you.

Update on Dredging Issues for the Appropriations Committee:

Two years ago we came before the Transportation committee at a March 14, 2022, public hearing to discuss House Bill 5421, *An Act Concerning A Small Harbor Improvement Project Account to Fund Dredging Projects*. We appreciated that opportunity because it brought attention and focus to the challenges we are facing on dredging. I wanted to update you on what has been happening with the issue since then:

- \$3 million was added to the DOT budget for dredging activities by your committee in that session's budget adjustment legislation.
- The CT Port Authority has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for a critical review of the dredging needs of our state. One-half of the \$1.5 million cost is being paid by the state. This "needs assessment" is important as it will quantify what the aggregate dredging needs are but will also show this for the small marina sector.
- Governor Ned Lamont visited a marina and boatyard in Mystic last summer and publicly stated dredging is important to our small, family-owned marinas and the broader economy of Southeastern Conn.
- We've seen state agencies communicating with one another on this issue and, in the case of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, with their counterparts in New York and Rhode Island.
- A significant development was the Rosado decision in September 2022 by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. They upheld the process which established the Eastern Long Island Disposal Site (ELDS) to take dredged materials. This is located about 2.5 miles south of Groton. For years, New York state was stopping the process cold by objecting to any permits that would use ELDS. On the day of the decision, Congressman Courtney said it best: *"It is time for all parties to get out of the courthouse and work together to implement the disposal plan."*

The key issue will be if New York allows permits to go forward. So far, we are aware of a large dredging project that has received preliminary clearance from USACE to dredge using ELDS. We are still waiting to see how this all shakes out.

We appreciate the Appropriations committee's interest in the need for dredging, and thank you for your continuing support of it.