

Public Hearing
Testimony
Thursday, February 11, 2021

To Co-Chairs Sen. Hartley and Rep. Simmons, Vice Chairs Sen. Cohen and Rep. Rochelle, Ranking Members Sen. Martin and Rep. Buckbee, and members of the Planning and Development Committee:

Thank you for taking the time to regard my testimony. Listed below are the following bills I would like to provide support, opposition and/or concern to:

Support for Proposed S.B. 165 – I feel that it is important not only to honor those lives lost due to Covid-19, this memorial should also honor our first responders and frontline medical/care workers who have served bravely through this pandemic.

Support for Proposed S.B. 625 – Reviewing what neighboring states have established in terms of the proposed database, it seems reasonable to support this bill, take what is modeled by other states, and improve it to meet our state's needs.

Support for Proposed S.B. 710 – Living in the second Congressional district, a substantial portion of industry falls under defense contractors and subcontractors. They seem to have been receiving a boon from federal support through our Congressional delegation, but it is important to provide a chain of opportunities and dialogue at the state level when there is uncertainty at the federal level. I support efforts to review the proposed incentives and learn more about the costs as well as the impacts this bill would have.

Support for Proposed S.B. 711 – Too many businesses are still struggling through this cold winter despite our improving infection rates and our top-ranking status for vaccinations against Covid-19. Understanding we may be several months if not the remainder of 2021 away from truly quelling this pandemic in our country, I wholeheartedly support the intent and efforts this bill provides to small business owners.

Concerns regarding Proposed H.B. 5150 – I strongly support the intent of this proposed legislation in terms of encouraging our next generations of young, educated students receiving Bachelors or Masters degrees to pursue jobs within state government. I am concerned though with any proposed language that restricts where a student may be allowed to explore the opportunity to join a collective bargaining unit. Organized labor has been a part of the backbone of many innovative workers' rights that are now seen as commonplace in private industry, including job security. It would be unfortunate to start this program and have students enter unprotected positions or positions without bargaining rights, only to have those positions impacted negatively or eliminated altogether due to budgetary austerity measures that collective bargaining units have more power to protect. If this bill was amended to remove item (3), I would have stronger support for this to be passed by the legislature.

Support for Proposed H.B. 5215 – I support the intent of this bill and would be curious as to the fiscal impact, as well as the anticipated range of grants this program would provide and who would directly benefit. Many primary public schools and other institutions are paving the way of focusing on STEM as a field to go into as a part of secondary education or advanced education. Promoting and supporting those who have put in the time in and years of tuition towards that education to grow these fields in a very educated state such as ours is crucial.

Support for Proposed H.B. 5612 – I support any efforts to improve the pool of prospective candidates available to technical high schools within our state. As a 2008 graduate of Howell Cheney Regional Vocational Technical High School, I recognized the existing staff was beginning to reach their golden years or nearing retirement. While I have heard newer trade staff have been doing well, our blue-collar workforce needs more professionals willing to provide teaching experience where they show themselves as excelling in those areas outside of certain teacher certification requirements. I believe once hired, there should be an effort to encourage or require a certification to be received within a period of time after being hired, but for the initial on-boarding, the certification be waived in certain circumstances.

Support for Proposed H.B. 5614 – As we have observed very clearly in the last year, disparities along socioeconomic and racial/ethnic lines are very clear in the impacts Covid-19 has had on mortality, long-term health effects, vaccination rates, and most germane to this commission, the economic impact to minority-owned businesses and economically disadvantaged business owners. We can learn from the mistakes that have been made and be prepared to face them with a better tool box and have a focus on which regions/groups will need additional focus in the ensuing years of recovery. I strongly support this bill.

Support for Proposed H.B. 5615 – I support the intent of this bill and encourage the DECD to collaborate with those regional/county organizations that may already be working on strategies for marketing their tourism/hospitality industries so a unified message can be relayed across the state, region and nation.

Support for Proposed H.B. 6119 – I strongly support the efforts this bill is proposing in terms of strengthening our Arts and ensuring the mission of this fund are more inclusive to sectors of our tourism industry that may otherwise be undervalued or supported.

Thank you for taking the time to regard my statements of support and concern regarding the bills before you at your Public Hearing. Be well and be safe.

Sincerely,
Steve Jones
Tolland, CT