

**Public Safety and Security Committee**  
**JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** HB-5481

AN ACT PROVIDING GRANTS FOR TOURISM PUBLIC SAFETY FROM

**Title:** REVENUE COLLECTED FROM THE OCCUPANCY AND MEALS TAX.

**Vote Date:** 3/19/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/12/2024

**File No.:**

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**SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Public Safety and Security Committee

**Co-Sponsors:** Rep. Greg S. Howard, 43rd Dist., Rep. Fred Gee, 126th Dist.,  
Sen. Heather S. Somers, 18th Dist.

**REASONS FOR BILL:**

In towns where tourism is higher than others, so is the need for public safety due to increased public intoxication, vandalism, and congestion. This bill would provide more money for public safety through revenue collected from the occupancy and meals tax, thereby continuing to encourage the tourism of the area.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None expressed.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

John Burt, Town Manager, Groton: Supports this bill and states that as a town located in the Mystic area, there is a high amount of tourism in the area which leads to increases in public intoxication, vandalism, fighting, theft, and congestions. This increase puts a strain on the local public safety resources, especially as Mystic's special events increase. The town of Groton has had to enhance its police presence to deal with these issues, but it does not have enough resources to handle it on its own. This bill would provide the additional resources.

Peter Armstrong, President & CEO, Mystic Seaport Museum: Supports this bill and states that while “outreach into the community is a key policy of the Museum” and the large groups of people brought to the area for the many events held have a strong economic impact to the area, the events are “in jeopardy” due to the high expense billed by the surrounding towns to the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce and host organizations to offset the police presence. This bill would allow grant funding to offset these expenses and allow the events to continue.

Danielle Chesebrough, First Selectman, Town of Stonington: Supports this bill stating that tourism is important for our state and is the 8<sup>th</sup> largest employer in CT, but the challenges that it brings with it can create problems for municipalities. The town of Stonington often has to hire officers on overtime and to work shifts during their time off in order keep in control of the 800,000 visitors to Stonington each year. During the events that the town hosts, some of them require almost the entire police department, which leaves few resources left for the actual population of the town. She also states, that if this bill is not found to be favorable, she would be open to exploring legislation that would allow municipalities to leverage their own tax on occupancy and meals in their community.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by: Hillary Desideraggio**

**Date: 3/19/2024**