

The Connecticut General Assembly



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Bridgeport Delegation Testifies in Support of Gaming Legislation

HARTFORD —The Bridgeport Delegation [testified jointly](#) before the Public Safety and Security Committee in support of legislation that seeks to establish a Connecticut Gaming Commission and create a competitive bidding process for a resort-casino at a public hearing Tuesday afternoon.

The [bill](#) would be the first update to Connecticut's gaming laws in over 20 years, and would allow the state to create a two-step bidding process. The bill allows the state to initiate the Request for Qualifications/Proposals process to evaluate proposals for a resort-casino in Connecticut from developers such as MGM, the Tribes and others.

The state ultimately would award the bid to a developer with the best project proposal and capacity to construct a resort-casino. The Connecticut Gaming Commission would be responsible for overseeing gaming in Connecticut and keeping the state's best interests first.

Members of the delegation including **State Representatives Andre Baker, Charlie Stallworth, Jack Hennessy, Chris Rosario, Steven Stafstrom, Ezequiel Santiago, and State Senators Marilyn Moore and Dennis Bradley, all Democrat**, have expressed their support for the legislation, which came from discussions with MGM after the state passed legislation to allow the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes to [construct an off-reservation casino in East Windsor](#).

However, the legislation does not seek to authorize a resort-casino in Bridgeport, but would only establish the Commission and a competitive bidding process.

“If we’re going to expand gaming then let’s do it the right way. An open competitive process is how we do it here in Connecticut and I don’t see why this process has to be any different,” said **Rep. Santiago, House Chair of the Banking Committee**. “Transparency is never a bad thing. I also think this is the best way for us to weigh the options so we can make a decision that will be beneficial economically to both the municipality selected and the state.”

“Connecticut is in tough financial shape, and one of the best ways to attain fiscal stability is through the development of a statewide gaming commission and initiating a competitive bidding process for a resort-casino,” said **Rep. Hennessy**. “This bill is about a fair and open bidding process, which will present the best options to grow Connecticut’s and Bridgeport’s economies. Connecticut has been stuck in the past, but this is an opportunity to move forward and create opportunities.”

“Expanding casino gaming could result in thousands of jobs, millions of dollars in new tax revenue and significant economic opportunities for the host community,” **Rep. Stafstrom, co-chair of the Judiciary Committee**, said. “Connecticut should not make a significant decision like authorizing another casino without an open, honest and transparent request for proposal and the opportunity for public input. That’s why the delegation has remained steadfastly committed to HB 7055.”

“The casinos in Southeastern Connecticut, at one time, were unique to the region, a draw for tourism, and a new source of revenue for the state. However, times have changed,” said **Rep. Stallworth**. “I’m in support of House Bill 7055, as it is designed to renew Connecticut’s casino dominance as well as allow for a competitive bidding to bring immediate economic impact as well as long-term benefits.”

“This is the proper approach to any new casino project - a competitive, fair, open and transparent process is in the best interest of the state and our taxpayers,” **Rep. Rosario** said. “In this process the state and public would be able to evaluate competing proposals that would include plans for hiring during all phases of construction and the jobs and economic impact and benefit to the host town after completion.”

“The residents of Bridgeport are hungry for an economic engine to ignite opportunities in a city that has been waiting for something to bring it back to life,” said **Sen. Moore**. “We as legislators, have an opportunity to craft legislation that is fair and equitable to anyone who is qualified to participate in the bidding process and to determine how the future of gaming plays a role in our quality of life, our vision for Connecticut, and our financial stability.”

The Delegation’s focus is bringing jobs and private revenue to Bridgeport, in order to help give the city a fair opportunity to thrive. The city has one of the highest unemployment rates in the state, according to the state Department of Labor, and economic growth has been stagnant.

The legislature brought [a similar bill up last year](#), which passed in the House, but did not make it through the Senate.

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