

Commerce Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5008

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT-PUERTO RICO TRADE

Title: COMMISSION.

Vote Date: 3/18/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/11/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Christopher Rosario, 128th District.
Rep. Juan R. Candelaria, 95th District.
Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th District.
Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st District.
Rep. Jason Rojas, 9th District.
Rep. Julio A. Concepcion, 4th District.
Rep. Marcus Brown, 127th District.
Sen. MD Rahman, 4th District.
Rep. James Sanchez, 6th District.
Sen. Herron Gaston, 23rd District.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of this bill is to establish the Connecticut-Puerto Rico Trade Commission, aimed at strengthening trade and investment relations between Connecticut and Puerto Rico. The commission will promote bilateral trade, business exchanges, economic support, and infrastructure investment between the two regions. Additionally, it will address policy issues of mutual interest and foster academic collaboration. This commission will help advance economic development and create more opportunities for collaboration between Connecticut and Puerto Rico, benefiting both regions in terms of business, investment, and infrastructure growth.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Aundre Bumgardener](#): He strongly supports HB 5008, which aims to establish the Connecticut-Puerto Rico Trade Commission. The bill will strengthen economic ties and promote collaboration on shared policy interests between Connecticut and Puerto Rico. The speaker highlights Puerto Rico's significant role as a trading partner, particularly in machinery, medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing. The commission could also foster cooperation in areas like renewable energy, agriculture, and technology. With a large Puerto Rican population in Connecticut, this bill would deepen trade relationships, create new economic opportunities, and promote cultural and policy exchanges between the two regions.

[Bryan Garcia, President & CEO, Connecticut Green Bank](#). He highlights the significant Hispanic population in Connecticut, with Puerto Ricans being the largest group, and emphasize the Green Bank's successful investment in clean energy within Hispanic communities. He also shares their involvement in helping Puerto Rico establish its Green Energy Trust (PRGET) after Hurricane Maria. Connecticut and Puerto Rico share mutual interests in clean energy policies and infrastructure. The Green Bank, which has been successful in promoting residential solar and storage, is set to provide funding to PRGET to replicate Connecticut's model. The speaker expresses eagerness to collaborate with the Commerce Committee in developing the commission and offering the Green Bank's resources.

[Tony Hwang, Connecticut General Assembly, State Senator](#): The bill proposes establishing a Connecticut-Puerto Rico Trade Commission to strengthen economic, cultural, and academic ties between the two regions. The commission aims to advance bilateral trade and investment, promote business and academic exchanges, encourage mutual economic support, and invest in infrastructure. This initiative will help Connecticut and Puerto Rico capitalize on untapped opportunities, foster growth, and address shared challenges, solidifying Connecticut's leadership in forming international partnerships.

[Hunter Keay, Chief Financial Officer, Avelo Airlines](#): The partnership between Connecticut and Puerto Rico through a bilateral trade commission offers significant economic and cultural benefits, with Avelo Airlines playing a key role in enhancing connectivity. Reliable, cost-effective air travel facilitated by Avelo would support trade expansion, business development, and tourism growth between the two regions. With industries like aerospace, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing thriving in both areas, Avelo's flights would strengthen supply chains and market reach. Additionally, the airline would foster cultural and community ties, benefiting the large Puerto Rican population in Connecticut and encouraging family connections and cultural exchanges. Avelo's support would be crucial for the success of the trade commission by ensuring efficient and affordable travel options.

[Maria Matos, Vice-President, Latinos for Educational Advocacy and Diversity \(LEAD\)](#): She highlights the historical, cultural, and economic ties between the two regions and the untapped economic potential. The bill would create a structured approach to fostering trade, investment, and partnerships, benefiting both regions, especially as Puerto Rico recovers from economic challenges and disasters. She urges the Commerce Committee to support the bill to strengthen the economy and promote collaboration between Connecticut and Puerto Rico.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

[Nancy Farnsworth](#): She suggests expanding HR 5008 to include a provision for Connecticut to divest from any bank that invests in Kellanova, the company overseeing Pop-Tarts. She criticizes Pop-Tarts for contributing to obesity, especially in children, and mentions that the product has been banned in several countries. They call for standing up to multinational corporations that prioritize profits over consumer health, emphasizing the need for healthier food options for children.

Reported by: Austin Adil

Date: 3/27/2025