

## Planning and Development Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-7153

AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PORT EASTSIDE  
INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT IN THE TOWN OF EAST

**Title:** HARTFORD.

**Vote Date:** 3/21/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/10/2025

**File No.:** 627

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development

### REASONS FOR BILL:

To allow for the establishment of the Port Eastside Infrastructure Improvement District.

The Substitute language amends Sections 1 and 2 and provides definitions for "District," "District improvements," "Approval for district improvements," "Benefit assessment," "Commissioner," "Public entity," "Voter," and "Bonds."

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Jason Rojas, House Majority Leader, Connecticut General Assembly](#), Representative Jason Rojas expresses strong support for HB 7153, which would create the Port Eastside Infrastructure Improvement District in East Hartford. He describes the Port Eastside Project as a transformative redevelopment of the town's riverfront, bringing mixed-use housing, commercial, and retail spaces to the area. He emphasizes that the district will enable essential infrastructure upgrades—such as roads, utilities, and public spaces—that are crucial for building a vibrant new neighborhood and addressing Connecticut's housing needs. Rojas points to the success of similar infrastructure districts in Stamford and Bridgeport, stating that such models have a proven record of encouraging development that wouldn't

otherwise happen. He urges the committee to support the bill to help realize East Hartford's revitalization goals.

**Connor Martin, Mayor – City of East Hartford,**

Mayor Connor Martin supports HB 7153, which would establish the Port Eastside Infrastructure Improvement District to help revitalize East Hartford's underutilized riverfront. He describes the project as a multi-use development featuring housing, retail, commercial space, and public amenities that will benefit not just East Hartford, but the entire Capital Region. Martin emphasizes that the district will provide a financing mechanism (like other successful Tax Increment Financing districts in CT) to reinvest project-generated revenue into essential infrastructure—like roads, utilities, and green space—while still increasing tax revenue for the town. He sees this to reduce bureaucratic delays while keeping the government involved. Ultimately, the Mayor frames the project as a key part of East Hartford's broader revitalization, aligning with regional efforts to make the Capital area a destination, not just pass-through.

**John Stafstrom, Member, Pullman & Comley,**

John Stafstrom Jr., a partner at Pullman & Comley and Co-Chair of its Public Finance/Economic Development Department, testified in support of HB 7153, which proposes the creation of the Port Eastside Infrastructure Improvement District in East Hartford. Stafstrom highlighted the success of similar projects in Stamford, Bridgeport, and Windsor, which used Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to revitalize their communities. He urged lawmakers to pass the bill, calling it a critical step in revitalizing East Hartford's riverfront and fostering economic development.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Bridgitte Prince** – Taxpayer and Voter – *Opposes*

Bridgitte Prince, a taxpayer and voter in East Hartford, opposes HB 7153 unless substitute language is added to ensure tax fairness, transparency, and oversight. She argues that the Port Eastside project is a private, luxury development backed by multimillionaires who are being exempted from paying property taxes, while average residents continue to face increasing tax burdens. She criticizes the bill's provision (starting at line 476) that exempts the district from taxes and assessments, warning that this would worsen financial pressure on public services and infrastructure. Prince also raises concerns about the town's history of favoring wealthy developers, citing past tax breaks, land sales for \$1, and uncollected penalty fees as evidence of poor fiscal management.

She calls for:

- State oversight of the district and town,
- Routine audits and inspections,

- Mandatory property tax payments by the district,
- And a public referendum before establishing the district.

Prince concludes that the district, as written, benefits developers at the expense of residents and undermines public accountability.

**Anonymous** – *Opposes*

An anonymous East Hartford resident opposes HB 7153 unless it includes revised language ensuring the Port Eastside Infrastructure Improvement District is solely responsible for its own debts and services. The testimony expresses concern that the district disproportionately benefits from revenue (via bonds and taxes) without proper oversight from the State or Town. With only three of the five district leaders residing in the area, the writer fears East Hartford taxpayers will shoulder the district's debts, worsening the financial burden—especially for fixed-income homeowners already affected by recent tax hikes and business losses. The resident calls for greater transparency and demands that a special meeting with homeowners be required before any vote—opposing the plan for a general referendum without adequate public awareness. They criticize the process as deceitful and urge for the bill to be revised with input from at least two-thirds of local homeowners, who they describe as the Town's primary investors.

**Reported by: Shay Richards**

**Date: 4/14/2025**