

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1242

Title: AN ACT FUNDING SMALL HARBOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.

Vote Date: 3/12/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/10/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill codifies Connecticut Port Authority's existing Small Harbor Improvement Project Program (SHIPP), setting parameters for distributing grants to small harbors, specifically providing reimbursement for dredging projects. Dredging is a process in which the natural buildup of silt is removed from harbors and docks. If too much silt builds up ships will get stuck, which could lead to contaminants getting into the environment, and the state having to pull stuck boats out of harbors. Due to a change in federal language the responsibility to ensure that our harbors are dredged now falls on the CGA. The cost of dredging projects and disposal are significant for small harbors and marinas, and this bill aims to provide relief for them while streamlining the funding process so they can continue to keep the harbors navigable to promote tourism on Connecticut's coastline.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language add language to codify "SHIPP", so that parameters could be placed around the program's grants and makes the conforming change to Section 1.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Michael O'Connor, Executive Director, Connecticut Port Authority

Executive Director O'Connor writes in their testimony that dredging must occur to ensure the safe navigation of vessels. This bill will streamline the process, the funding paths will be made clear to the recipients, and the CPA will be provided with preauthorized funds that they can then disperse to areas based on environmental and economic conditions. He further

points out that the bill will provide flexibility in permitting the CPA to apply the SHIPP program in New London, New Haven, and Bridgeport.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Senator Martha Marx, Connecticut General Assembly

In her testimony Senator Marx argues that this bill would allow small harbors the proper funding to dredge, which is a natural process to remove sand and silt. Due to a change in federal language the CGA has a responsibility to ensure the continuation of the dredging process. A lack of funding could result in severe consequences as our wildlife and environment would be exposed to contaminants. Senator Marx further argues that by funding dredging projects that state saves money in the long run as the state will not have to pull boats up that get stuck in the sediment.

Chris Brown, General Manager, Safe Harbor Bruce & Johnsons Marina

Brown writes in their written testimony that the natural buildup of silt can reach a degree that ships become unusable and are thus closed off. By allocated funds to offset the high costs marinas must incur due to stringent disposal rules will be a much-needed relief for marinas.

Samuel Gold, Director, Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

Executive Director Gold writes in their testimony that our state's small harbors are an important component of our economy and that investments in these harbors have a high multiplier effect for tourism and marine trade business therefore silt must be removed through regular dredging to keep these harbors navigable.

Stephen Goldschmidt, Chairman, Guilford Marina Commission

Chairman Goldschmidt detailed in their testimony the many steps needed to be taken to acquire permits and select consultants. The chairman notes that this bill streamlines and enhances the flexibility of CPA to fund SHIPP grants without the added step of requiring CPA to return to the Bond Commission for approval of each project.

Robert Petzold, Board Member, Connecticut Marine Trades Association

Mr. Petzold discusses in his testimony the importance of dredging due to the difficulty it could create for boats to navigate. He points out that it has become much more difficult to dispose of the waste through open water placement in Long Island Sound at sites established by the federal government. He points to New York's history of objecting to permits leading to marinas having to divert their waste to the Central Long Island Sound Disposal Site, leading to higher costs. He also points out that it is difficult to dump at the Western Long Island Sound Disposal Site as it has a more rigorous "consistency review" process. Lastly, he discussed how many marina members are small, family-owned businesses that cannot afford the current high costs and may have to close if they have to continue to endure these high costs.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

General Opposition

The following individuals opposed the legislation for broad reasons:

- **Joy Martin Arrowsmith**
- **Robert Berman**

Reported by: Patrick Riley

Date: 3/13/2025