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**MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT  
Connecticut House Bill 5001**

On behalf of 3,324 Connecticut based aircraft owners and pilots, **AOPA supports House Bill 5001.**

In 2014, the Connecticut Airport Authority (CAA) asked the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association (AOPA) for recommendations on boosting economic activity at the state's airports. AOPA proposed removing the 6,000 lbs. threshold for the sales and use tax exemption. This recommendation is based on creating tax parity with neighboring states, a declining number of small aircraft based at the state's airports and the added economic impact of enticing flight schools to upgrade their fleets to safer and more environmentally friendly aircraft.

During the 1970's the US boasted an active pilot population of 1 million pilots. Today, the pilot population hovers just over 500,000 active pilots. Interestingly, most private pilots and flight schools operate aircraft that were manufactured in the 1970's and 80's. It was around this same time that these aircraft were being mass-produced that the Vietnam War ended, and the military stopped producing as many pilots. The reduction in new pilot entrants came at the same time as increased scrutiny of aviation safety that lead to regulatory changes resulting in more stringent standards for certifying new aircraft. As the demand for new aircraft waned with a declining pilot population, the cost of aircraft soared as manufacturers were forced to recover certification costs over fewer sales. At their high point during the 70's manufactures would produce 1,000 of each aircraft model annually. Today, light aircraft manufacturers combine to produce less than 1,000 new aircraft annually yet demand for commercial airline travel continues to grow.

A 2019 Boeing study forecast industry demand for 804,000 NEW pilots and 769,000 NEW aircraft technicians that are needed over the next 20 years to meet growing global demand for air travel. The United States is the world leader for training pilots and technicians for both U.S. and foreign airlines. A significant factor contributing to our world leading status results from broad access to aviation infrastructure with more than 5,000 public use airports across the country, including 23 public use airports in Connecticut.

With schools like CT Aero Tech training aircraft technicians in Hartford and Robinson Aviation training pilots in New Haven and others across the state, Connecticut has opportunities for *career and technical education (CTE)* in aviation. As the primary training ground for career-minded pilots and technicians, general aviation is now on the rebound putting these good-wage paying opportunities within reach for many youths. Neighboring states like New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island have capitalized on this opportunity by exempting aircraft below 6,000 lbs. from their sales tax. For them, the savings is passed through to students as lower operational costs for flight schools. Connecticut should make the same investment in general aviation to expand opportunity for local youth. For these reasons, **AOPA supports House Bill 5001.**

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The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is the world's largest not-for-profit aviation membership organization, representing the general aviation interests of more than 320,000 members across the country. Please contact Eastern Region Manager Sean Collins at 301.695.2090 or by email at [sean.collins@aopa.org](mailto:sean.collins@aopa.org) for more information about AOPA and our support for H.5001.