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Testimony in Support of SB 282
Joint Senate Policy Committee Hearing
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I am Jenn Beer, senior director of government affairs for the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, and I appreciate the opportunity today to testify on the Waterfront Development Tax Credit.

The Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce is an affiliate of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. Together, the Conference and its Affiliates – work in collaboration with public and private sector partners to improve the economy and enhance the quality of life in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Our members, who employ tens of thousands of residents in Western Pennsylvania and beyond, believe that thriving communities are essential for a prosperous state and a healthy business environment. Many of our communities are located on waterfronts, offering an abundance of opportunity for increased waterfront development—leading to greater economic activity and an enhanced quality of life.

Therefore, I am here today to offer testimony in support of SB 282 – the Waterfront Development Tax Credit – which would encourage private investment in waterfront property and spur economic development, environmental improvements and public recreational enhancements.

The Allegheny Conference and the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber have a long organizational history of supporting waterfront development from the Renaissance One development of Gateway Center and Point State Park, to the creation of Riverlife and the rejuvenation of our riverfronts.

Most recently, the Allegheny Conference has launched the Strengthening Communities Partnership which focuses private sector funding in selected communities that have not benefited from our region's economic resurgence. Some of these partner communities have revitalization plans that include waterfront investment as well.

Having worked closely on brownfield redevelopment efforts, we are well aware that waterfront areas often face barriers to redevelopment including abandoned industrial uses and contamination. Significant investment is required to address these barriers and make sites ready for reinvestment and reuse. While there is desire to enhance waterfront areas, access to sufficient funding has remained an ongoing challenge.

The proposed legislation would provide funds for waterfront development projects by creating a tax credit that would be available to individuals or businesses that contribute to nonprofit waterfront development organizations.

At its inception in 1944, the Allegheny Conference focused on improved flood control and water quality. In recent years, the Conference has returned to this critical issue. It is working with a range of partners in our community to develop a better integrated, more coherent conveyance system for wastewater and stormwater, implement source reduction and green infrastructure, reduce compliance costs and secure clean water for our region.

We are pleased to see that some of the eligible uses for the tax credit funding would be for promotion of erosion control and storm water management and the creation of green spaces as well as for other uses.

One of the biggest changes in the Pittsburgh region in recent years has been a renewed commitment to our waterfronts from brownfield redevelopment to housing to parks and trails and recreation. We have rediscovered the waterfronts that gave our region its historic strengths and will shape our future together.

In closing, we would like to thank the Republican and Democratic Policy Committees for taking time to hear how essential this tax credit is for the entire Commonwealth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.