House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 500

January Session, 2025

House Bill No. 5008

House of Representatives, April 3, 2025

The Committee on Commerce reported through REP. MESKERS of the 150th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the bill ought to pass.

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT-PUERTO RICO TRADE COMMISSION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a Connecticut-Puerto Rico Trade Commission, which shall be part of the Legislative Department.

(b) The commission shall consist of the following members:

(1) Two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives;

(2) Two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate;

(3) Two appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives;

(4) Two appointed by the majority leader of the Senate;

(5) Two appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives;

(6) Two appointed by the minority leader of the Senate;

(7) Two members of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to commerce, one of whom shall be appointed by the Senate chairperson of such committee and one of whom shall be appointed by the House chairperson of such committee;

(8) The ranking members of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to commerce, or their designees;

(9) Three persons appointed by the Governor;

(10) A representative of a public institution of higher education in the state, who shall be appointed by the Governor;

(11) A representative of a chamber of commerce in the state, who shall be appointed by the Governor; and

(12) Two representatives of Puerto Rican or Puerto Rican-American communities in the state, who shall be appointed by the Governor and shall not be members of the same political party.

(c) The members of the commission shall each have current or past involvement in organizations that promote Puerto Rican affairs or are interested in the well-being of trade relations between the state and Puerto Rico.

(d) Any member of the commission appointed under subdivisions (1) to (6), inclusive, of subsection (b) of this section may be a member of the General Assembly.

(e) (1) All initial appointments to the commission shall be made not later than October 1, 2025. Initial appointments made by the Governor, the majority leader of the House of Representatives and the minority leader of the House of Representatives shall terminate on September 30, 2028. Initial appointments made by the speaker of the House of

Representatives, the president pro tempore of the Senate, the majority leader of the Senate and the minority leader of the Senate shall terminate on September 30, 2029. The initial and subsequent terms of members appointed by the chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to commerce shall be coterminous with the terms of the appointing authority for each such member in accordance with the provisions of section 4-1a of the general statutes.

(2) Appointed members of the commission shall serve for four-year terms which shall commence on the date of appointment, except as provided in subdivision (1) of this subsection. Members shall continue to serve until their successors are appointed.

(f) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro tempore of the Senate shall select the chairpersons of the commission from among the members of the commission. Such chairpersons shall schedule the first meeting of the commission, which shall be held not later than November 1, 2025.

(g) The chairperson of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus of the General Assembly, in consultation with the Office of Legislative Management, shall appoint the administrative staff to serve as the administrative staff of the commission.

(h) Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority. Any vacancy occurring other than by expiration of term shall be filled for the balance of the unexpired term.

(i) A majority of the commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business.

(j) The members of the commission shall serve without compensation, but shall, within the limits of available funds, be reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of their duties.

(k) The commission shall have the following powers and duties: (1)

To advance bilateral trade and investment between the state and Puerto Rico; (2) to initiate joint action on policy issues of mutual interest to the state and Puerto Rico; (3) to promote business and academic exchanges between the state and Puerto Rico; (4) to encourage mutual economic support between the state and Puerto Rico; (5) to encourage mutual investment in the infrastructure of the state and Puerto Rico; (6) to address such other issues as determined by the commission; (7) to obtain from any executive department, board, commission or other agency of the state such assistance and data as are necessary and available to carry out the purposes of this section; (8) to accept any gift, donation or bequest for the purpose of performing the duties described in this section; and (9) to perform such other acts as may be necessary and appropriate to carry out the duties described in this section.

(l) The commission shall meet as often as deemed necessary by the chairpersons or a majority of the commission. Any appointed member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings or who fails to attend fifty per cent of all meetings held during any calendar year shall be deemed to have resigned from the commission.

(m) Not later than February 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the commission shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the Governor, the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to commerce on the activities of the commission during the preceding year, which shall include, but need not be limited to, any recommendations for policy changes and amendments to the general statutes necessary to effectuate the purposes of the commission.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	*from passage*	New section

CE *Joint Favorable*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 26 $	FY 27 $
Legislative Mgmt.	GF - Potential Cost	Minimal	Minimal

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill establishes a Connecticut-Puerto Rico Trade Commission resulting in a potential minimal cost to the Office of Legislative Management. The bill specifies that commission members serve without compensation but can be reimbursed for necessary expenses resulting in a potential cost to the extent reimbursements occur.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5008

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT-PUERTO RICO TRADE COMMISSION.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes a 23-member Connecticut-Puerto Rico Trade Commission within the Legislative Department to do the following between Connecticut and Puerto Rico:

1. advance bilateral trade and investment,
2. initiate joint action on policy issues of mutual interest,
3. promote business and academic exchanges,
4. encourage mutual economic support and infrastructure investment, and
5. address other issues the commission determines.

To carry out its duties, the bill also authorizes the commission to (1) obtain necessary assistance and data from any executive department, board, commission, or agency in the state; (2) perform necessary and appropriate acts; and (3) accept gifts, donations, or bequests.

The bill requires the commission, starting by February 1, 2027, to annually report to the governor, Department of Economic and Community Development, and Commerce Committee on its activities during the prior year. At a minimum, the report must include recommendations for policy and legislative changes needed to carry out its duties.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS

Members

Under the bill, the commission includes the following 23 appointed members:

1. two members each appointed by the six top legislative leaders;
2. two Commerce Committee members, one each appointed by the committee chairpersons;
3. two Commerce Committee ranking members, or their designees;
4. three members appointed by the governor;
5. one representative of a Connecticut public college or university, appointed by the governor;
6. one Connecticut chamber of commerce representative, appointed by the governor; and
7. two representatives of Puerto Rican or Puerto Rican-American communities in the state from different political parties, appointed by the governor.

Under the bill, commission members must be (1) currently or formerly involved in organizations promoting Puerto Rican affairs or (2) interested in trade relations between Connecticut and Puerto Rico.

Appointments

The bill requires appointing authorities to make their initial appointments by October 1, 2025, and fill any vacancies. Those occurring other than by term expiration must be filled for the unexpired term balance.

All members, except those appointed by the governor, may be legislators.

Terms

Under the bill, members generally serve four-year terms, until their successors are appointed, except as follows:

1. initial gubernatorial and House majority and minority leader appointments terminate on September 30, 2028;

2. initial House speaker, Senate president pro tempore, and Senate majority and minority leader appointments terminate on September 30, 2029; and

3. initial and subsequent Commerce Committee chairperson appointments are coterminous with appointing committee chairperson.

Under the bill, members serve without compensation but are reimbursed, within available funds, for necessary expenses incurred performing their duties.

Leadership and Meetings

The bill requires the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore to select the commission's chairpersons from among its members. The chairpersons must schedule and hold the commission's first meeting by November 1, 2025.

Under the bill, the commission may meet as often as the chairpersons or a majority of the commission members deem necessary. Members who miss three consecutive meetings or 50% of the meetings in a calendar year are deemed to have resigned. A majority of members is a quorum for conducting business.

The bill requires the chairperson of the general assembly's Black and Puerto Rican caucus, in consultation with the Office of Legislative Management, to appoint administrative staff to serve in this capacity for the commission.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Commerce Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 20 Nay 0 (03/18/2025)