



TOWN OF AVON

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TESTIMONY BY THE TOWN OF AVON ON HB 5741: "THE PREVAILING WAGE BILL"

I am pleased to testify before the Labor & Public Employees Committee on HB 5741 – "An Act on Prevailing Wage Bill." This bill would raise the prevailing wage threshold for new construction projects from \$400K to \$1 Million, and for renovated projects from \$100K to \$500K. I am here today representing the Town of Avon, but I think my testimony applies to all the towns and cities of the State of Connecticut. The State's Prevailing Wage Law is an unfunded mandate that costs towns, cities and the State hundreds of millions of dollars each year. Reform of the Prevailing Wage Mandate would provide fiscal relief for the State, local governments and Connecticut taxpayers. The Prevailing Wage Mandate inflates the cost of State and local Public Works projects, especially school construction. Studies have shown that Connecticut municipalities spend 20-30% more for school projects, due to this unfunded mandate. Approximately 80% of construction workers in Connecticut are non-union and these workers live and pay taxes in the very town that have to exclude them, due to this law. Connecticut's Prevailing Wage Law, like in many other states, was enacted to protect workers during the Depression era from some contractors who practiced unfair hiring or workers. Today I think these laws are now doing more harm to towns and cities than they are helping workers.

While HB 5741 would make important strides to reform existing Prevailing Wage Rate Law, I think it does not go far enough to make a major impact on the fiscal costs to the towns and cities. For example, new school construction today would run from about \$40 to \$100 million, and additions run from about \$5 to 25 million.

I recommend that a three year moratorium on Prevailing Wage Rate Law in Connecticut would be the best approach to provide necessary relief to towns and cities, while thoroughly addressing this issue.

Richard W. Hines,
Retired Chairman of the Avon Town Council