

Testimony of Stacy Tarkowski
Before the Appropriations Committee

Feb. 23, 2009

Good evening members of the Appropriations committee. My name is Stacy Tarkowski. I work at the Meriden Superior Court as a Court Support Services Intake Assistant with probation. I have been employed by the State of Connecticut for over 18 years, the last 3 ½ at the Meriden Superior Court.

I am here to urge you to keep the Meriden Superior Court open. Because I work in the court house I see first hand how important it is to keep our court house open. Meriden Superior Court is located in an economically struggling city, and has a higher case load than many other courts. Many of the clientele who come into our court live locally and are low-income wage earners or totally indigent. Closing the court would create a hardship to them and their families. Many of them have no means of transportation and no funds to take public transportation.

Many times I have given patrons money either to make a phone call to call for a ride or to take the bus just to get to the other side of town. Those who do not have the funds for child care also bring their children to court. I do not see how these people would be able to travel to another court location many miles away.

If those who live near Meriden Superior Court had to attempt to get to another court, it would likely result in numerous failure-to-appear warrants being issued. They would be rearrested for not being able to make it to court and then end up with a felony or a misdemeanor on their record. This is not fair.

People rely on the services from the Meriden Superior Court which include criminal, motor vehicle, civil, and family matters. Local businesses would also be affected, particularly those that rely on court staff and clientele for their financial support. Our courthouse truly plays an important role by contributing to the local economy.

I realize Connecticut faces an economic crisis. But you don't cut your way out a crisis, as the governor has proposed. Instead of making service cuts, I personally think we should look at closing corporate tax loopholes and raising incomes taxes on our wealthiest residents. They have received plenty of tax breaks over the last few years and could pay their fair share to help save vital public services, like those we provide at Meriden Superior Court.

Thank you for your time and consideration.