



Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 13, 2009

HB 5366, An Act Concerning the Reduction of Grants Under the Citizens Election Program **SB 604**, An Act Concerning the Reduction of Certain General Election Grants under the Citizens' Election Program; **SB 1109**, An Act Concerning the Reduction of General Election and Primary Grants under the Citizens' Election Program.

Good day Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone and members of the General Administration and Elections Committee, my name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide anti-hunger and food security organization. I am here today in order to voice my support for the Citizens' Election Program and request that you do not cut back the funding to the program.

The program has only been in effect for one election. Cutting funding will only weaken what has proven to be good and fair program. Since 75% of those how ran used the program, and 81% of those elected participated, I believe that it may be called a success. This is a program that really is meant to bring the community into the election process. The candidates are out meeting with possible constituents not on the phone looking for big donors. Additionally, the Citizens' Election Program gives equal access to all the constituents, and all the people who contribute to the campaign.

I was involved in a legislative battle in which my small nonprofit was up against some of the most well heeled lobbyists in the state who worked for very large multi-national companies. At times, we clearly did not have the opportunity to argue the merits of our position. Without the capability to contribute to campaigns or go to high priced fundraisers, we were, far too often, written off. Now, times have changed. Campaign finance reform and the Citizens' Election Program has changed those relationships. The people I advocate for, average citizens, are now able to give a \$5.00 donation to those candidates who understand their issues and are becoming involved and invested in campaigns.

We should be encouraging candidates to run with the same funding, and fundraising, capabilities. Connecticut is a leader in the nation with our Clean Elections Program. We are what other states look to and strive for. This is not the time to make cuts to this program. It's clearly doable, and really gives the candidate a reason to go and to talk to many more people than he or she may have without the program. Those candidates then really know his or her constituents, and contributors are able to feel invested in their candidate, which will allow for policy to have the backing of the populace of Connecticut.

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. I urge you to please keep the Clean Elections Program intact and not to cut anymore funding from this model program that is working.