

S.B. No. 868

Testimony by Andrea Okrentowich before the Housing Committee
February 19, 2009

Hello, my name is Andrea Okrentowich and I live at 22 Seymour Avenue in Seymour< CT

I am here today to testify on the loss of the Pilot and Tax Abatement programs that were recently cut from the 2009-2010 budget; and what it means to public housing residents.

I am a public housing resident of Seymour. As President of Castle Height resident council, I see first hand the negative effects of the loss of the Pilot. While the state may feel that these relatively small amounts of money may save the state money; it is really going to cost everyone in the long run. Seymour was one town that raised rents last year when the Pilot was cut. Within the few months that Pilot was missing, rents were raised by \$65.00; families were forced to choose between food and rent. Eviction rates increased rapidly and there was an overall sense of fear throughout our community.

My family could not make ends meet when our rents were raised. My lights were in jeopardy of being cut off; my phone was shut off and we had to rely on the food bank for food. The food bank does not provide dairy or fresh vegetables, so my children's nutritional needs were not met. There was not enough money in our budget for transportation needs; we were unable to get to doctors appointments.

What I would like to get across to everyone today is that while there are many important programs in CT that need funding, the Pilot and Tax Abatement programs will keep 800 families with a roof over their heads. During these difficult economic times, employment is difficult to find and public housing is desperately needed. I can not understand why the state would willingly remove money that would keep our children in their homes. Without a home, nothing else matters, it is life's most basic necessity. Keep our children in their homes and please restore Pilot funding.

Thank you,

Andrea Okrentowich
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