NASW National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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Good afternoon members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Marcia Bok and I am here today to testify on behalf of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in support of revenue enhancement solutions to the current fiscal crisis in Connecticut. The solutions I propose are generally supported by Better Choices for Connecticut, as well. There are two essential points I would like to make:

First, cutting the budget cuts jobs and services. I believe this is the last thing we want to do in a time of fiscal crisis when maintaining and creating jobs and helping those in need should be our primary considerations. We need to expand opportunities and jobs because this is an investment in our future. We are told that cutting taxes creates jobs. Reality suggests that this is not so.

Second, on the enhanced revenue side, I thought William Cibes, former secretary of OPM made some excellent points in his op-ed piece in the Hartford Courant. He notes that in Connecticut the rich pay much less of a share of their income on taxes than the poor and this has been going on for quite a while. In fact, recently, the rich have done a very poor job contributing positively to our economy and the gap between the rich and the poor grows wider every day. In this time of increasing hardship for the non-rich, we are asking poor people to continue to pay more than we are asking rich people to pay. He notes that reducing spending is actually a tax on the poor because we ask those who can least afford it to either pay more for the services they receive or to go without these services altogether. Social workers see evidence of this every day.

A recently released report from the IRS, going back to 1992, found that in 2007 America's wealthiest households reported their highest incomes and lowest taxes on record. A tax analyst, David Cay Johnson, who first reported these data said "Since 1992, the bottom 90 percent of Americans have seen their incomes rise by 13 percent in 2009 dollars, compared with an increase of 199 percent for the top 400". Even in this time of terrible recession, many rich people are still getting richer.

I really don't think Keno and opening liquor stores on Sunday is the right way to raise revenues. This hits the wrong people. As I said above, there are people in Connecticut who can definitely help to support the State more than they are currently doing. I think there is a moral imperative here as well as sound economic principles that I hope will be compelling. Thank you very much.