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Labor and Public Employees Committee
Room 3800, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-240-0540

Dear Committee:

I was unable to attend the hearing in the Legislative Building this afternoon, but wish to add my comments for your consideration of proposed bill SB 990.

The existing requirement for Municipalities to pay the prevailing (union) wages for Municipal Capital Projects larger than \$100,000 (renovations) and \$400,000 (new construction) effectively excludes local contractors from bidding on large jobs in their own locale, because there is no practical way to pay some employees the prevailing wage and at the same time, a different wage to others who work on similar (private) and small public projects that do not have that requirement. So they can't bid the (public) projects at all unless they bid all their work at "prevailing wage" -- and they usually don't. Municipality officials hear many complaints from local contractors that they don't get a fair shot at large local Municipal projects.

This is grossly unfair. In small communities especially, most construction work is on private projects and public projects smaller than the legal threshold for prevailing wage requirements, and local contractors are for many reasons able to provide customers with better quality, lower cost work that helps their customers grow and succeed. It is unfair also, to legislate conditions that require Municipal customers and taxpayers to pay more for the work on their projects than the best they could achieve through use of local contractors.

It's a poor strategy, in my opinion, to select the highest geographical wage in the state and impose it as homogeneous "prevailing wage" standard on the entire State (one size fits all) for all major capital projects of all municipalities. This bill to increase the thresholds is a big step in the right direction, and it is an appropriate adjustment to correct threshold levels for inflation. However, as a policy, it still means higher costs of renovation and new construction in public institutions, especially in education, which translate into increased Municipal costs and increased property taxes.

I urge the Committee and the Legislature to approve Bill SB 990.

John H. Field
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