



**Testimony by Clarke King, President  
AFSCME Local 1716  
Insurance and Real Estate Committees  
Re: HB 6308 and 6305  
Feb. 14<sup>th</sup> 2011**

Good afternoon. My name is Clarke King. I am the president of Local 1716, City of Hartford employees and also Secretary of Council 4 AFSCME. I am testifying in support of House Bill 6308. This bill will create one large pool of people to get the best price for health insurance. It will allow for more municipal employees to go into the same pool as the current state employee pool. The current pool has over 250,000 lives in it.

Two years ago the renewal rate increase for this pool was a zero. That's right – a zero! That is almost unheard of when rates for plans are going up at 15, 20, 30% or higher. This is because economics teaches us that when you buy something it is “cheaper by the dozen.” I'm amazed that smart elected leaders have not noticed this and acted on it yet. I have faith that Governor Malloy – our new governor – will act on this.

Last year, the prescription drug pooling bill became law. Our unions pushed hard for this and we pushed the city of Hartford to participate. It's estimated that prescription drug pooling will save Hartford taxpayers two million dollars!

I can tell you about not only the plight of public employees, but the plight of all kinds of employees in the City of Hartford – who happen to be my neighbors. While public employees are being skapegoated as overpaid, I can tell you that this is not true, certainly not in Hartford. They are being laid off in the middle of a second Great Depression. That is very true. Other employees have seen almost nothing in the way of pay increases in the last eight years. While the price of oil, rent and food have gone up, wages have not. Almost any increase in wages, including among municipal employees has gone to covering increased co-pays and increases in health care costs.

Please care about the shrinking middle class. Please care about the poor families who work so hard in this city, and instead of getting ahead are slipping behind. Passing this bill will save towns, the state, nonprofits and small business tens of millions of dollars per year. We cannot afford not to pass this pooling bill. It is long overdue. Thank you for your attention and your concern.

Our union urges your support of HB 6308 and 6305. We have come too far to turn back the hands of progress and fairness. Thank you very much.