



CITY OF NEW HAVEN
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John DeStefano, Jr.
Mayor

**Testimony of the City of New Haven
Before the Planning and Development Committee**

Regarding
HB 5035, AN ACT REDUCING MANDATES FOR MUNICIPALITIES

Submitted by
Rebecca Bombero, Legislative Director, City of New Haven
February 22, 2012

Senator Cassano, Representative Gentile, and members of the Committee,

The City of New Haven is pleased to have the opportunity to comment in support on HB 5035, An Act Reducing Mandates for Municipalities.

While the state has done its part to protect municipalities from the drastic cuts witnessed to cities and towns in New York, New Jersey and across America – we continue to struggle to balance the service needs of our residents against rising costs and a tax base that can not absorb tax increases. This bill reduces some of the costly burdens borne by the towns, thereby relieving some of that pressure.

Section 1 – Concerns “Record Redaction” and clarifies that the requirement extends to only the records of employees who request that their home addresses be redacted. This clarification is important as previous interpretations would have required the redaction of countless unknown individuals creating an unmanageable administrative burden.

Section 2 – Concerns “The Assessment of Partially Completed Structures” and clarifies that those buildings that are partially completed or under construction can be assessed. In each of the past five years taxes from the assessments on such structures in New Haven have averaged about \$370,000 each year.

Sections 6 & 7 - Concerns the storage of possessions of evicted tenants. PA 10-171 relieved the municipality of the burden of transporting these possessions from the residence to the storage facility enabling the redeployment of staff time to other critical public works functions. Despite these savings the storage of goods still costs the City between \$242,000 and \$376,000 annually. The new provision would enable the City to pass these costs along to all the “users” – both tenants and landlords. When possessions are not claimed and fees paid by the tenant, or the proceeds from auction do not cover these costs, the bill transfers these costs from the municipality to the landlord or bank. The bill, however, fails to include a collection method – like the ability to place a lien on the property – to ensure that the town can actually recover these costs.

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Section 8 – Concerns the definition of employment. The bill removes from the definition of employment those “in the employ of a political subdivision of the state in a part-time, temporary or seasonal position where the total number of hours of service performed is not more than six hundred hours in a single calendar or other accrual year;”. This reform would provide significant relief to the City where unemployment costs topped \$591,000 in FY 2010 and were still over \$450,000 in FY 11. While some of these costs were result of the layoffs necessary to balance previous budgets, some are due to interns, election workers, substitute teachers and seasonal workers collecting unemployment. This clarification will help the City to reduce its unemployment costs by limiting claims of these temporary workers.

Thank you for consideration of this matter and your continued support of local municipal governments.