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TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE FINANCE, REVENUE, AND BONDING COMMITTEE

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In Support of Raised Bill 6566, An Act Concerning Transparency in Economic Assistance Programs

Senator Fonfora, Representative Widlitz, Senator Frantz and Representative Williams, and distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony this morning.

I am Heath Fahle, the Deputy Director of the Yankee Institute for Public Policy Studies, rising in support of Raised Bill 6566, An Act Concerning Transparency in Economic Assistance Programs.

The Yankee Institute launched the Connecticut Sunlight Project in February 2010 to give Connecticut's taxpayers the ability to review state government expenditures on a line-by-line basis. Over the past three years, our website CTSunlight.org received **1.6 million page views** from almost a **half million visits** and it has grown to encompass nearly **2 million records**.

In our assessment, this response is indicative of the public demand for information about how public funds are spent. The General Assembly took a significant step forward in this regard in 2010 with the passage of Public Act 10-155, An Act Requiring the Establishment of a Searchable Database for State Expenditures.

We were cautious supporters of that bill because we viewed it as an important and valuable public function. Our concern, as always, was cost. Yankee invested about \$50,000 to create and launch CT Sunlight so we were concerned about how much it would cost the state. Happily, OFA reported that the Transparency.CT.gov site was created within their existing budget.

It is with these views in mind that we offer support of the proposed legislation here. Raised Bill 6566 takes a logical "next-step" in the process started by Public Act 10-155 by making public itemized data from the state's various economic assistance programs. A number of states, such as Texas, Missouri, Massachusetts, and Nebraska already make such information available to the public. Take for example the Missouri Accountability Portal, or

MAP, is available online at mapyourtaxes.mo.gov, makes economic assistance data in a very easy-to-use, searchable, data downloadable format.

In conjunction with the transparency infrastructure that already exists in the state, this bill will make useful tools available to the taxpayers of this state. Anyone that wants to will be their very own budget hawk.

It is important to view these transparency efforts should be viewed as part of an ongoing process, rather than a one-time event. Raised Bill 6566 is the next step in this process and I urge your support. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.