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**To the Co-Chairs and members of the Government Administration and Elections**  
**Testimony about Proposed SB 669 AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR PARTIES AND**  
**TRANSPARENCY OF ELECTIONS**

*Submitted by Lindsay Farrell, Executive Director*

Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this bill.

Working Families is Connecticut's third largest party, having received over 67,000 votes in last November's elections across all five congressional districts. We have won seats on the Bridgeport Board of Education, the Hartford Board of Education, the Hartford City Council, the Hartford Registrar of Voters office, the Windham Town Council and have supported dozens of major party candidates for office in our 10 years.

Working Families cannot support SB 669 with its current mechanism. We support this goal of transparency and a threshold of democracy, but we need to find a different way to do it, than to just impose the major party rules on minor parties.

Minor parties have many burdens that they already have to meet by state statute. Just a few examples: We need to collect petition signatures to qualify to be on the ballot, for example we collected over 7,500 valid signatures for the governor's race in 2010. The Citizen's Election Program requires the collection of signatures from 20% of the number of people who voted previously in that election for us to receive a full grant. There are arbitrary restrictions placed on how and where we can make nominations that require us to find "placeholder" and "qualifying" candidates just to maintain our status as a party. And then there are the institutional challenges; the media does not help us in the way it helps major parties, we do not have access to a national fundraising infrastructure, we don't even get a check box for party affiliation on voter registration cards. We gladly jump through all these hoops because in the power of democracy and the broadened awareness of issues that our small party has delivered to the electorate since our inception just ten years ago. We believe that we have showcased that building a serious minor party is a real exercise in organizing and there should not be dozens of frivolous fringe parties set up to suit the whimsy of a

particular politician or zealot. Serious minor parties like ours engage in 365-day-a-year advocacy and activism for the issues that are most important to the voters we represent.

The way this bill is currently conceived, we would have to do double-duty to be able to participate in elections and nominate candidates. It would be an unreasonable burden to force us to adopt the major parties' system in addition to all the minor party regulations we already must comply with. Attorneys have informed the party that the state would be making itself vulnerable to legal action with this set of rules.

All this is not to say that we object to any changes that would create a requirement of a threshold of democracy for minor parties. Reasonable checks and standards are entirely appropriate to ensure that minor parties are real and serious.

Let me take this opportunity to describe our nomination process. We require a questionnaire for all candidates, and frequently request one or more interviews for a candidate. Our interviews are open to anyone who is a member of the party or a member of an affiliated organization. All our nominations are made at meetings registered with the Secretary of State and in a paper of general circulation, as required by state statute. The members of our board collectively represent 110,000 retirees and working men and women throughout the state, and have been popularly selected from that base. A combination grassroots leaders from each of the five congressional districts, and leaders representing affiliated organizations vote democratically on nominations. They are then signed by our chairs, signed by the candidate, and filed with the Secretary of State. We are prepared to support any reforms that require minor parties to meet basic standards of democratic selection from a broad constituency, and transparency and accountability for decision-makers and leaders. We are already operating in this way.

We have worked hard to grow our process into a vibrant, accessible, and thoughtful one. It is unnecessary and onerous to make well-developed, democratically-minded parties like ours throw out our system and start from scratch. We urge you to find another solution to this issue, and look forward to partnering with you to do so.

**Please reject or replace SB669. Thank you.**