

**Testimony of
Lydia Brewster
Assistant Director for Community Services
St. Vincent de Paul
Submitted to the
Planning and Development Committee
Friday, March 21, 2014**

**HB 5583, An Act Concerning the Payment of Real Property Taxes by Certain
Institutions of Higher Learning and Hospital Facilities**

I am writing to oppose HB 5583, An Act Concerning The Payment Of Real Property Taxes By Certain Institutions Of Higher Learning And Hospital Facilities. Connecticut enacted the property tax exemption for hospitals in recognition of their critically important role in the community. St. Vincent de Paul has worked collaboratively with Middlesex Hospital and other community partners to create the Community Care Team (CCT), which specializes in the delivery of care for people with serious mental illness and/or substance abuse in Middlesex County.

The CCT found that the traditional model of episodic care delivery does not adequately meet the needs of its shared population. The team's objective is to provide patient-centered care and improve health outcomes by developing and implementing wrap-around services through multi-agency intervention and care planning.

From the perspective at St. Vincent de Paul Middletown, the presence and strength of leadership and direction that exists in the CCT has reinforced what those of us who are involved with the challenge of housing homeless people have long been keenly aware: People without housing will utilize the services of an emergency room as a matter of necessity. The CCT has embraced the fact that lack of sufficient supportive housing for people with complex medical and behavioral health conditions accounts for a significant percentage of the emergency department use. The CCT has allowed all of its participants to attain greater understanding of the subpopulations utilizing the ER and thereby create more collective, comprehensive and realistic short and long-term treatment planning. It is an extraordinary example of a community collaboration getting better results for patients, raising standards of care, and reducing costs. St. Vincent de Paul feels privileged to be part of this collaboration.

Hospitals play a critically important role not only within their walls, but also in their communities. For this reason, I ask that you maintain the current real property tax structure.