

Testimony of James White, President, Publicly-assisted
Housing Resident Network (PHRN), March 2, 2015,
before the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut Legislature

Good evening, Honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. Co-Chair Byers and Co-Chair Walker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak before you and the committee tonight.

My name is James White. I live at 193 C. Centennial Avenue, Meriden, Connecticut. I am the President of the Publicly-assisted Housing Resident Network or PHRN as we call ourselves for short. We are a state-wide organization of public housing and publicly-assisted housing residents throughout the state. We are dedicated to preserving and improving our affordable housing communities and being a voice for residents at the local, state, and federal levels.

Tonight we are here to ask that you reconsider the elimination of the PILOT and Tax Abatement grants that are contained in the Governor's budget proposal. PHRN has been here in previous years to address this very same issue. In 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, Governor Rell proposed the elimination of Pilot and Tax Abatement grants for state public housing and affordable housing complexes in her proposed budget. PHRN was here to fight it. In 2013, Governor Malloy did the same thing. PHRN was here to fight it.

Now we are back again because the Governor has removed PILOT and Tax Abatement funds from the state budget. PHRN is here to urge the Legislature to restore these funds. Without PILOT and Tax Abatement grants, rents in many communities and for nearly 10,000 of the lowest income families in the state will increase dramatically. It is estimated that residents in Middletown who are already paying more than 30% of their income for housing, will have their rents increased by \$135 per month if PILOT funds are not restored. It is estimated that residents living at Meadowview Manor in Stratford will have their rents increased by \$69 per month. These are huge rent increases and they will be born by the lowest income families in state public housing. They will undoubtedly push many poor families over the edge into homelessness because they don't have other options.

This state has cared about low income folks over the years with important programs that have helped to stabilize families – the PILOT and Tax Abatement grant programs are 2 such programs. The proposed removal of PILOT and Tax Abatement funds from the state budget will put many families into a spiraling downturn of destabilization. Many will be forced to seek out a shelter in order to put a roof over their heads.

Please restore PILOT and Tax Abatement grant funds to the state budget. Do not balance the budget on the backs of the poorest residents in our state.

Thank you for your attention to my testimony.