



FOUNDATION FOR FAIR CONTRACTING
OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

TESTIMONY of
Cindy Dubuque, MSW
Executive Director

***Raised Bill 850 AN ACT AMENDING THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR
LOBBYISTS TO REDEFINE "LOBBYING" AND "EXPENDITURE",
DEFINE "GRASS ROOTS LOBBYING" AND RAISE THE THRESHOLD
FOR LOBBYIST REGISTRATION.***

Honorable Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila and esteemed members of the GAE committee, the Foundation for Fair Contracting of Connecticut submits this testimony in partial opposition to Raised Bill 850: *AN ACT AMENDING THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR LOBBYISTS TO REDEFINE "LOBBYING" AND "EXPENDITURE", DEFINE "GRASS ROOTS LOBBYING" AND RAISE THE THRESHOLD FOR LOBBYIST REGISTRATION.*

Specifically, we ask the committee to remove the definition of grassroots lobbying from the bill, which is overly broad and endangers the participation of citizens in the democratic process.

As an industry-sponsored organization, the Foundation for Fair Contracting focuses on issues concerning wages, classification of workers and apprenticeship standards on public construction projects. As such, part of our work includes educating workers about their rights, and about policies that impact their lives. We encourage workers to not only be informed, but provide them with the tools to be empowered to engage with their elected leaders. Under this definition of "grass roots lobbying", any labor organizer who educates workers about their rights and encourages them to advocate for themselves could be considered a lobbyist, even if they never speaks to a legislator themselves.

In my other role, as an adjunct professor of social welfare policy at the University of Saint Joseph, I educate students on the legislative process, on how to analyze policies and on how to be effective advocates. My course is a hybrid between policy analysis and political advocacy. Under this definition of grass roots lobbying, I could now be considered a lobbyist in my roles as a professor.

The foundation of our democracy rests on the political participation of the citizenry. This definition of grass roots lobbying would only serve to further intimidate those who seek to be a part of the political process. In addition, it would put another cost upon speech that is supposed to be free.