Ralph Eno
First Selectman
Town of Lyme
Before the Labor & Public Employees Committee
February 24, 2015

Thank you for this opportunity to comment in ***support*** **of SB-113, SB-114, SB-180, SB-181, HB-5071, HB-5072, HB-5073, HB-5074, HB-5075, HB-5076, HB-5078, HB-5079, HB-5208, HB-5209, HB-5440, HB-5441, HB-5510, HB-5511, HB-5515, HB-5516, HB-5613, HB-6246, HB-6250, HB-6251, HB-6650, and HB-6666, which would adjust the prevailing wage thresholds.**

Adjusting the prevailing wage thresholds is an important step in providing towns with some much needed relief from unfunded state mandates. It is also critical to moving forward with local building projects that have been too costly under prevailing wage laws.

In these difficult economic times, the state must give municipalities more control over key elements in their budgets. Capital projects are one of those elements.

The prevailing wage law, under which the state dictates to towns the wages they must pay for work on capital projects, has been unchanged since 1991. The law requires all towns to pay the prevailing wage on new projects costing more than $400,000, and improvements to existing facilities costing more than $100,000. This increases the cost of local building projects and makes it difficult for local contractors to bid on projects.

For example, Lyme has recently completed construction of a new library as well as expanding and remodeling our town hall. The complicated prevailing wage bidding and reporting process discouraged our local contractors from bidding. We had no takers.

The wage and hour documentation was costly and time consuming as well. Thankfully, we were subjected to just one review. The stack of documents was quite daunting.

Also, contrary to the position that prevailing wage laws ensure quality workmanship, the quality of work on this project in a number of areas was substandard, i.e. concrete floors 2 inches out of level in a 40 foot run and a siding crew that had no lead person despite the fact that none of the installers spoke English. I had to lay out the courses for them as they had no idea what a story pole was. Soffits and vents poorly installed as were gable end rake boards. Big dollars and poor quality, that's what we got with prevailing wage requirements.

It has been 24 years since the prevailing wage thresholds were touched and in those years construction costs have gone up dramatically. Legislation adjusting the prevailing wage thresholds is long overdue. **I urge your support for adjusting the prevailing wage thresholds.**