Testimony of Tom Delucia
President, AFSCME Local 287
Labor and Public Employees Committee
HB 6934: AAC Wages Paid to Individuals Providing Food, Building, Property or Equipment Services to Municipalities
March 3, 2015

Good afternoon, Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Tom Delucia. I am the President of AFSCME Local 287, representing New Haven public school custodians.

The 100 members of my local union urge your support for HB 6934: An Act Concerning Wages Paid to Individuals Providing Food, Building, Property or Equipment Services to Municipalities.

In 2010, during contract negotiations, a representative of the New Haven Board of Education told me and the other members of the negotiation team that we could be replaced by a private company where the employees are paid a fraction of our wages and earn no benefits and therefore it was in our best interests to give in on their demands. The Board of Education then went out and solicited bids from for-profit companies.

An independent researcher, Jeannette Wicks-Lim of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, analyzed the bid the Board ultimately accepted – one from GCA Services Group. She found, and a copy of her study is included with my testimony, that "the proposed contract reduces costs by simply paying workers less: all of the cost savings from the GCA Services Group contract bid result from pay and benefits cuts."

That is what ultimately happened. The Board of Education, following an arbitrated award, our bargaining unit maintained 100 full-time positions and the rest of the work of cleaning New Haven's schools was outsourced.

This is simply wrong. As a taxpayer, I do not want my government driving down wages.

Our wages and benefits allowed us to get by. We did not even make the average family income for the New Haven region, but we could afford basic expenses without having to rely on public assistance. The cut that came with outsourcing led to over 100 families earning so little that they qualified for SNAP and HUSKY. That's simply shifting costs from the municipal budget to the state budget, and devaluing work in the process.

HB 6934 will ensure that when local government buys a service they preserve the going rate of wages for that service.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Council 4 AFSCME, 444 East Main Street, New Britain, CT 06051 (860) 224-4000
www.council4.org • info@council4.org