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The Honorable Senator Catherine A. Osten  
Co-Chair, Planning and Development Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2100  
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Representative Philip J. Miller  
Co-Chair, Planning and Development Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 4011  
Hartford, CT 06106

Members of the Planning and Development Committee  
of the Connecticut General Assembly

Re: H.B. 5886 AN ACT PROHIBITING MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES FROM  
SERVING ON CERTAIN MUNICIPAL LEGISLATIVE BODIES

Thank you for your consideration of the above bill and for the opportunity to provide some of my thinking on why I believe this bill is critical. While many municipalities find themselves similarly situated as a matter of city charter/ordinances and the state law, those municipalities (to the best of my knowledge) have governed themselves appropriately and therefore have not encountered the issues—sometimes egregious—that we live with in Bridgeport. For those municipalities, passage of this bill will simply codify the status quo. For Bridgeport, it will fundamentally change how we govern.

I'm sure I don't have to recount for you Bridgeport's sad, recent history of corruption. The city cannot hope to restore its economic base and quality of life if the fabric that supports it is incompletely woven. Good governance is prelude to credibility. Credibility requires a base of integrity. We cannot hope to achieve any of this when there are no checks and balances protecting the integrity of process and the interests of taxpayers.

At the moment we have four municipal employees serving on the City Council, including one who serves as President of the Council. How can we expect them to vote in our best interests if/when it is directly opposite of their own economic self-interest? It isn't just about salaries and the

budget; the conflict of interest arises in all sorts of matters. When your boss, the mayor, has a pet project that you feel is detrimental to your constituents, do you risk a no vote? Do you lose your job, risk demotion, lose a raise in salary? None of this should be in the equation, none of it. But these considerations arise in Bridgeport all the time—or at least nearly every time the City Council meets. Rather than expect some impossible impartiality, some safe neutral ground where municipal employees can legislate with integrity, let's just correct the dilemma. Let's not ask municipal employees to be super humans.

Let us, with passage of this bill, set the tone for good governance in Bridgeport and every other municipality. Let's weave the fabric tightly so it wraps integrity and good government in cloth that endures.

Most sincerely,

Mary-Jane Foster  
Bridgeport resident