

**TESTIMONY BY CYNTHIA JENNINGS, HARTFORD CITY COUNCILWOMAN**

**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 464  
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A HARTFORD FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION  
March 28, 2016 11:00 a.m.  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING**

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. My name is Cynthia Jennings, and I am an elected member of the Hartford City Council. I am also a Civil Rights Attorney, and I have served in Connecticut State Government as Assistant to the Chief Court Administrator; Assistant to the Commissioner of Education, and Executive Director of the Black and Latino Caucus of the Connecticut General Assembly. I am also a lifelong Hartford resident, and Council Committee Chair of the Public Works, Parks and Environment Committee. I serve as well, on the Budget Committee, the Labor Committee, the School Building Committee and the Public Safety Committee on the Hartford City Council. I am entering my fifth year on the Hartford City Council. I say this to say that I have been through the budget process in Hartford on four separate occasions, and there were years when our budget was far more severe than this year, and we did not have to engage in severe layoffs, re-opening of union contracts, and other means to balance the budget that put Hartford residents and City Employees at risk of losing their jobs, their homes, and their means of support. The City of Hartford is predominantly African-American and Latino.

The State of Connecticut was recently cited in the Wall Street Journal, (Connecticut, America's Richest State, Has a Huge Pension Problem, By Aaron Kuriloff and Timothy W. Martin--Updated October 5, 2015) as America's Richest State. This refers to the fact that the State has a per capita income of approximately \$65,000, boosted by towns such as Greenwich, New Canaan, and other wealthy towns in Fairfield County.

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Even though Connecticut has the highest per capita income, the New York Times also stated that Connecticut has roughly half of what it needs to pay future retirement benefits for its workers. In fact, Connecticut is Number 1 the country for per capita income, and number 48 in funding of its pension obligations. This disparity, places workers in Connecticut at extreme risk. Not only is the Financial Stability Commission, a huge social experiment, if unions can be busted in Hartford, and the budget can be balanced on the backs of labor, then the next logical step would be to allow the State of Connecticut to sidestep its responsibilities to workers by allowing pension promises made to labor, to be ignored.

Ignoring union contracts and circumventing the arbitration process in Hartford, would have significant and dire consequences on the economy of the State of Connecticut. Those displaced workers and their families would have no choice but to turn to the State for food, clothing and shelter. The tax bases throughout the State would shrink, and many jobs with living wages, would be reduced to job that are no longer considered as living wage jobs. This may appear to solve the problem, but busting unions in Hartford would close fire houses, layoff firefighters, public works, public safety and other workers, and provide a further level of injustice to workers who have to bargain annually, in order to obtain benefits and healthcare so that they are able to care for their families. Connecticut taxpayers would have to carry the burden for workers who are laid off in Hartford.

We need to take a hard look at why the City of Hartford has a structural deficit every year. The structural deficit is caused specifically because 52 percent of Hartford land is tax

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exempt. A huge part of that land is utilized by the State of Connecticut because Hartford is the Capital City.

Hartford is in this fiscal crisis PRIMARILY because the State of Connecticut, for the last ten years, has NEVER paid full Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to the City of Hartford. It is unconscionable for the State of Connecticut to pass State law relative to management of our budget, while the State budget is also in severe crisis, and the State refusal to pay its bills to the City of Hartford, is the PRIMARY reason the City is in financial difficulty.

SB 464 does not mention, nor does it address the fact that the State FAILING TO PAY ITS BILLS TO THE CITY OF HARTFORD, is the reason that the City of Hartford is in fiscal trouble. Further, SB 464 produces no plan to have the State reimburse the City for full pilot, agree to pay the more than two years owed on the XL Center rent, nor does it purport to expedite payment for reimbursement of State monies owed, that the city incurred in the building of schools required under state statute. This legislation (SB 464) makes no effort to even agree to reimburse the city for the tax on tickets that the Stadium sells, a project that the State does not provide fiscal support to, and there is also no mention as to any agreement to implement a ½ of 1% payroll tax on employees working in Connecticut, to assist in covering expenses incurred to the host cities including Hartford, for street maintenance, road repair, fire and police protection, environmental pollution, and other costs currently being incurred by Hartford residents for the 123,000 commuters that come into the City to work on a daily basis.

It is a huge injustice for the State of Connecticut to attempt to balance Hartford's budget on the backs of organized labor, when the reason that the City of Hartford is in a

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budget crisis, is because the State of Connecticut refuses to make the PILOT program tax payments which they owe to the City of Hartford.

Additionally, SB 464 has the power, and will, reduce services to Hartford schools, reduce services to Hartford residents by cutting labor in every department, and by driving up the already excessive number of residents who are losing their homes because of their inability to pay. This is a discriminatory, unjust and unconscionable piece of legislation, that ignores every piece of federal and state legislation that was put in place to protect workers. Connecticut become the wealthiest state in the nation on the backs of workers. SB 464 is unconscionable, because to operationalize this type of legislation, Connecticut taxpayers will now have to support unemployed workers and their families.

SB 464 will ABSOLUTELY take away the power of the elected City Council. SB 464, will REDUCE SERVICES TO HARTFORD RESIDENTS through its ability to serve as the ARBITRATION BOARD for unions. The fact that the Board of Education unions, public works unions, Hartford professional employee unions, and any and all other affected unions, provide services to the City of Hartford through their labor agreements, and by virtue of the fact that if these unions will be disempowered by the SB 464 Arbitration Board, Hartford residents will be at risk of having their public works, educational, economic development and other services cut without Council input. This TOTALLY and UNEQUIVOCALLY removes the POWER OF THE CITY COUNCIL. When fire houses can be closed, fire fighters can be laid off, less firefighters can be assigned to ride the fire trucks, and when police overtime, police officers and police cruisers and other equipment can be cut, this ABSOLUTELY TAKES

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AWAY THE POWER OF THE CITY COUNCIL TO PROTECT THE RESIDENTS OF THIS CITY, and the Hartford City Council will not be able to stop these changes taking place in this city, under this new State Law, developed and designed for HARTFORD.

The power of the City Council has not been changed under the Charter, that is a true statement. THE POWER OF THE COUNCIL has been TOTALLY REMOVED UNDER STATE LAW!!! If this law is passed, our Capitol city will be forever changed, the people will be disempowered, and the people they elected to serve would not be able to protect them from catastrophic change under a law that only governs the City of Hartford. This is an egregious and unacceptable removal of the voting rights of Hartford residents,

I urge Finance Committee members not to vote this bill out of committee.