

March 28, 2016

## **Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee Senate Bill 464**

Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, and Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. My name is Elizabeth Kavanah, I work for the city of Hartford in the Department of Health and Human Services. I am also a leader in my union, CSEA SEIU Local 2001. I represent a dedicated and diverse group of professionals spanning many Departments in seven locations throughout the City. Together, we are committed to the core values and mission of the City.

Our members perform **technical support** for Hartford Police Officers on patrol, Dispatch Center and Police Department civilians, ensuring equipment is always in top condition. Our **Crime Analysts** provide up to date intelligence information to Officers out in the Community. **Nutritionists** in the Women Infants and Children Program provide nutrition and parent counseling services to vulnerable and underserved populations, expecting mothers, and their young children. Our skilled **Plan Reviewers** in the Building Department are essential for public safety code compliance and determine appropriate fees for building permits. **Health Inspectors** investigate indoor air quality issues and mitigate health risks such as lead and rat infestations that affect City residents and visitors and assure that food service establishments are held to standards that prevent food borne illnesses. Our **Planners in the Zoning Department** work to ensure that Hartford has sustainable and livable neighborhoods through zoning and proper land use.

Senate Bill 464: An Act Establishing the Hartford Financial Sustainability Commission, would strip due process and collective bargaining rights from every unionized city employee in Hartford and it would give that power to an unelected commission to dictate how public resources are invested.

This proposal to eliminate collective bargaining damages the mutual trust and respect that has been cultivated between city employees and different administrations over many years. I encourage the committee to reject Senate Bill 464 as it would force the city to abandon collective bargaining and void contracts which were negotiated in good faith.

There are many union members testifying before this committee today, and you should know that the reason we joined our respective unions is to have predictability on things that matter. As it is, the benefits and wages in Hartford are less competitive than our surrounding cities for many positions. A loss of collective bargaining rights will make it harder for Hartford to attract and retain staff, leading to a significant degradation of city services.

Our members are dedicated to the City of Hartford and have proposed deficit reduction ideas ranging from the sale of unused equipment to elimination of overlapping services. These ideas have been presented by our members to supervisors and managers in the hopes of increasing efficiency of city government and eliminating waste.

Mayor Bronin has the ability to seek contractual changes through existing negotiation processes; he does not need this legislation to get the city's finances in order. Current labor laws establish a fair framework for all parties involved; if the parties reach impasse and end up in arbitration, an independent panel resolves the dispute. The financial ability of the city to pay is factored into these awards.

Please reject Senate Bill 464. Thank you for your time and consideration.