

March 28, 2016

To Senator John Fonfara, Representative Jeffrey Berger and Members of the General Assembly Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding:

The Connecticut Center for a New Economy opposes S.B. 464, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE HARTFORD FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

The Connecticut Center for a New Economy (CCNE) has worked, over the years, to strengthen the bond between Hartford residents and their government. With our non-partisan Community Voter Project we have engaged dozens of residents and allied organizations in knocking on doors in Hartford's lowest propensity voting districts. We have had thousands of doorstep conversations with residents about what they care about, and about pursuing their aspirations for their community through their elected leaders, starting with their vote.

S.B. 464 would limit the civil rights of Hartford residents and would damage that already too fragile bond between our City and its elected leaders. It diminishes the power of the new City Council that was just elected four months ago. It concentrates power with the new Mayor by allowing him to appoint members of a Commission who are not accountable to City residents. It damages the civil rights of our City workers who engage in collective bargaining through their unions. S.B 464 gives the Commission, that is not accountable to Hartford residents, powers to interfere with union democracy and with union members' fundamental right to negotiate.

These bedrock democratic rights are not important to us only when times are good, only when coffers are full and needs are met. They are even more important when times are rough. If there is a fiscal crisis, the newly elected leaders should step up and lead, not abdicate responsibility. Nine members were elected to the City Council and all nine should be fully engaged the budget process. If there is a crisis, engage with our Municipal unions and the leaders they have elected. The quality of our City's jobs is even more important during a crisis.

A third of Hartford residents live below the federal poverty line. Nearly half of Hartford's children live below the federal poverty line. Staggering, chronic unemployment holds our Capital City back. We have to approach this problem with these concerns front and center. During the last few post-recession years we have learned that it is harmful to the health and welfare of our communities to cut public jobs, especially at a time when demand for services is high.

Submitted by Renae Reese, Executive Director, CCNE, 860-280-7320,
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The Connecticut Center for a New Economy (CCNE) promotes economic, social and racial justice for Connecticut's unemployed and working people.