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**Testimony of Cheri Quickmire  
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Regarding Governor Malloy's Budget Proposal  
February 19, 2016**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Ranking members Senator Kane, Representative Ziobran and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee thank you for accepting my testimony. Common Cause is a nonpartisan, non-profit citizens' lobby that has worked to improve the way Connecticut's government operates since 1971. Common Cause in Connecticut has a strong history of working to increase transparency in government and advocating for the removal of the corrosive influence of special interest money in government and politics. We have more than 7,500 members and activists in Connecticut.

We understand that the state is in a difficult position and is forced to make hard decisions but we have a concerns about this budget proposal, proposed process and funding changes and continued attacks on the three watchdog agencies – State Elections Enforcement, Office of State Ethics and Freedom of Information. These three agencies have been squeezed repeatedly including by the ill-advised grouping under the Office of Government Accountability which took away independence and any semblance of budget decision-making based on actual program needs

This tells only a portion of the story though. Details of funding loss have been presented by Michael Brandi, SEEC, Carol Carson, OSE and Colleen Murphy, FOI. The numbers presented may seem small in the larger scheme of things but with an additional 5.75% now being stacked on top of the 7% cut from last year these groups are not going to continue to be viable and provide vital services.

Common Cause is proud of our work to secure the Citizens' Election Program, and both offices of Ethics and FOI. We do not want to see them further damaged. And we do not want to see the important work of the elected legislature in budgeting decisions removed by this proposal.

Governor Malloy has proposed replacing a line item budget with one in which state agencies are allocated block grants, and would subsequently have appointed commissioners make internal, closed decisions about agency spending. Common Cause has a long history of advocacy around issues of transparent government, and we find Governor Malloy's plan to be the antithesis of open and transparent. Public scrutiny

and oversight is essential to a government that is of, by, and for the people. Governor Malloy's proposal would make the process of allocating tax payer dollars completely opaque and hidden from the public. Openness in government strengthens democracy, promotes efficiency, and allows members of the public input on decisions that directly affect their lives.

Common Cause's concern with this proposed change in the budgeting process is that takes away control of budget from the elected legislature and threatens the integrity of the process. Transparency in the process not only allows the public a voice, but also provides a strong disincentive for misuse of funds. Connecticut's history of corruption among elected officials long plagued the state before the historic passage of the 2005 campaign finance reform bill which mitigated the damage that former Governor Rowland and others wrought in the state, and restored the public's trust in state government. Governor Malloy's plan would reintroduce secrecy and behind closed door decision-making by political appointees that may foster increased public distrust in state government.

We question why Governor Malloy, at a time when across the nation people are calling for increased government transparency and public engagement, is choosing instead to increase the amount of decision making that takes place behind closed doors.

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