



## **Finance, Revenue, & Bonding Committee – March 28, 2016**

### **Testimony in Opposition to SB 464, An Act Establishing the Hartford Financial Sustainability Commission.**

Good Afternoon Co-Chair Senator Fonfara, Co-Chair Representative Berger, Ranking Member Senator Frantz, Ranking Member Representative Davis, and all members of the Finance, Revenue, & Bonding Committee. My name is Ken Blue and I am President of AFSCME Council 4 Local 1716 in Hartford which represents more than 500 city employees, which include a large majority of Hartford residents. We maintain the parks, plow the roads staff our public libraries and so much more. We keep the City of Hartford running.

Local 1716 is strongly opposed to SB 464 which takes away the collective bargaining rights of city employees and is a top-down approach to resolving any issues rather than working in collaboration with front-line workers who know what it takes to do the job. In recent years we have taken furlough days, had layoffs, transitioned into the state pension plan, and enrolled in the Rx pooling plan to help save the City money. Our members have sacrificed in the past and because of collective bargaining we were able to strike fair deals that mutually benefited both parties. SB 464 would take away that right to come to a fair agreement by removing the existing processes that have been shown to be effective. Currently, we would negotiate with the City and if we are unable to come to an agreement we would go to arbitration where a neutral third-party would make the final determination. In SB 464, the arbitration panel would be the oversight commission which has representatives from the City, including the Mayor, which would be far from neutral. This is an overreach of power which strips the hardworking members of Local 1716 of their collective bargaining rights.

In addition, the commission would have two business representatives while only having one labor representative. This could influence the commission toward being in favor business interests rather than Hartford interests or the interests of the employees who provide public services. Taking into consideration that this commission also has arbitration powers, it is difficult to see how a fair collective bargaining agreement could be reached between any union and the City.

Our union strongly urges you to reject Senate Bill 464 until negotiations between the City and its union representatives have taken place so that both sides can present solutions rather than having them imposed by a commission. We need a Hartford solution, not a Flint, Michigan solution. This action seems to be very early into the Mayor's term and we

would like the opportunity to work together with him before he takes the rights of his employees away from them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.