TESTIMONY BY MAYOR MARCIA LECLERC, TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD

March 4, 2016

H.B. Bill No. 5478 an Act Concerning Grants In Lieu Of Taxes.

Senator Osten, Representative Miller and the members of the Planning and Development Committee.

Good morning. My name is Marcia Leclerc and I am the Mayor of East Hartford. I am before you today to encourage your opposition of House Bill 5478, An Act Concerning Grants In Lieu Of Taxes.

It is with great concern that I come before you in opposition to H.B. 5478, which would decrease East Hartford's and other towns PILOT funding, an important resource we rely on to balance our respective budget's. The proposed bill would reduce funding by not reimbursing towns for K-12 properties owned by private nonprofit institutions of higher learning. The proposed amendment would eliminate PILOT funds associated with two Magnet Schools owned and managed by Goodwin College, as well as the Hartford Pathways School.

The magnet schools came to fruition as a result of the state funded Sheff initiative. Additionally, the Hartford Pathways school construction on Goodwin's property was done at the request of the State to assist the City of Hartford, which could not find a location in Hartford to build the school. Prior to considering the location of these schools, OPM confirmed PILOT funding would be available for these magnet schools. Accordingly, the Town of East Hartford supported these projects based upon PILOT eligibility. If the Town knew at that time that PILOT funding would be eliminated in the future, it would not have supported the schools and would have worked with Goodwin College to use this very valuable riverfront property for PILOT eligible College dormitories, facilities and sports stadiums, as well as commercial development.

Excluding these properties from the State PILOT will burden municipalities, like East Hartford, who provide critical services such as; police, fire, emergency and public works services in connection with schools built as part of the Sheff initiative.

It is for these reasons that I ask you to oppose any changes to PILOT funding that would exempt K-12 schools on private nonprofit institutions of higher learning properties.

Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

Marcia A. Leclerc
Mayor
Town of East Hartford