



**Testimony of Sal Luciano, Executive Director, Council 4 AFSCME  
Subject Matter: SB 445**

**Joint Committees on Appropriations, Commerce, Finance, and Planning & Development  
March 23, 2018**

Good afternoon. My name is Sal Luciano. I am the Executive Director of Council 4 AFSCME. Our union represents 35,000 hard-working women and men, from paraprofessionals, correctional officers and plow drivers to child abuse investigators, police officers and wage and hour violations investigators.

I thank the joint committee members for hearing my testimony in opposition to SB 445, AN ACT CONCERNING AN ANALYSIS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON FISCAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

And I would like to thank this commission for stepping up to make recommendations to try and help CT. Doing a civic duty is an important responsibility to improve our quality of life.

I know many of the Commission members are quite intelligent and have successful businesses. However, quite frankly, I don't believe that means you can have a blueprint for fixing Connecticut in 76 days. There are too many big items, such as the cost of energy, or income inequality, or racial isolation, that are not even mentioned as problems so that you don't have to try and find a solution.

You want to pull a billion dollars from the budget by cutting government spending. That is a very noble thing however, there are not two economies in Connecticut –we have one economy. First it is an insult to our elected politicians; do you think they would have spent 1 billion more in the budget if they didn't have too? Look at what happened when the budget cut some millions from Medicaid. It was fine on paper but the outcry from parents and grandparents of children with special needs who would have lost vital services made this legislature backpedal post haste.

Taking that much money out of Connecticut's economy would not only hurt Connecticut's economy but it would also hurt services, or education or municipalities or infrastructure or most likely, all of the above. Don't take my word for it, just look at Kansas, where Governor Brownback followed the Commission's advice.

Paul Wellstone said, "Politics is not about big money or power games; it is about the improvement of people's lives..."

But the Commission's recommendations are about big money. Yes, rich people pay more in taxes than poor people. However, when you add the amount of taxes as a percentage of their total income, working people pay 11% of their income toward taxes while the wealthy pay less than 5%. And this is NOT counting the trillion and a half tax cut to the wealthy and powerful that just passed by federal legislation.

So cutting taxes on the wealthy while increasing the sales tax simply makes the percentage even more distorted and regressive. And while I do appreciate the recommendation to raise the minimum wage, why does that have to wait years while tax breaks for the wealthy happen now?

The Commission also goes after collective bargaining for public service workers, even as it tries to repeal estate and gift taxes for the wealthiest individuals.

Commission members also want to raise prevailing wage thresholds that specifically target the skilled members of the building trades: carpenters, laborers, operating engineers and more. Their livelihoods, with their built-in weeks where they can't work in inclement weather, makes earning that union wage even more important for themselves, their families and their local communities.

I have to ask: How does it help to lower wage and community living standards? I think we know the answer. Let's make better choices that will move Connecticut forward and create an economy that works for everyone.

Because, as the Senator Wellstone also said, "We all do better when we all do better."

Thank you.