



Testimony of Allison Blake, CEO
Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut
In opposition to
SB1137- AN ACT CONCERNING DEPOSITS IN LIEU OF TAXES and
SB 1138- AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY RESTORATION FUNDS
Finance Revenue & Bonding Committee, April 29, 2019 Public Hearing

Senator Fonfara, Representative Rojas and Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, my name is Allison Blake and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Child & Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut. I thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in **opposition to section 1 of Senate Bill 1137- An Act Concerning Deposits in Lieu of Taxes and section 5 of Senate Bill 1138- An Act Concerning Community Restoration Funds.**

Child & Family Agency operates 13 school-based health centers, three child guidance clinics, 2 early childhood development centers, Family Resource Centers, an after-school program in New London, and several other home-based services through contracts with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. We employ over 200 staff in these programs and last year we served over 10,500 children and their family members. Our programs support children's mental health, children's physical healthcare, the prevention of child abuse, the treatment of family violence, teen pregnancy prevention, parent education, early childhood development, and healthy family functioning. With a heritage that dates from 1809, Child & Family has grown to become one of the largest non-profit child and family social service providers in southeastern Connecticut.

Section 1 of Senate Bill 1137 and Section 5 of Senate Bill 1138 would add a new property tax on non-profits of 25% of the property value. As a 501(c) (3) with a savings/endowment fund, we are currently exempt from property taxes but still contribute critical services to our communities where we serve residents throughout southeastern Connecticut. All of our services are offered on a sliding fee scale, and when necessary we work with families struggling to make ends meet so that they do not lose essential services such as child care or after school programming. Additionally, Child & Family Agency has a network of over 300 volunteer auxiliary members throughout the region who provide support by hosting community events for the area's families throughout the year. Some examples are the Annual East Lyme Touch A Truck, the Annual Tag Sale, and Polar Express which supports families during the holiday season.

Ensuring our non-profit status is honored is critical to our mission and to serving as many people as we do. The last decade plus has been a challenge with a difficult economy and significant budget cuts. In fact, our agency, despite many successes, has had to close programs including school-based health centers due to budget cuts. If our agency had the means to keep these programs running we would have continued operations. However, the cuts have impacted our services and additional taxation will likely take important funds away from critical services, prevent us from paying our staff appropriate wages, and reduce our ability to step in to support vulnerable families when unexpected emergencies arise.

We understand the important intent behind the bills to provide community development in distressed municipalities and many of our urban areas. We share this mission, and we expect you know that the residents of this state that we serve are often the most in need. Taking any resources away from the population we serve is the wrong approach. If this were to occur, my greatest concern is that we would need to raise fees for essential services such as child care and afterschool programming, or reduce and possibly cut those programs where families cannot afford to pay. This would have an even greater impact on the region as any program/service reduction would result in staff layoffs resulting in an increase in unemployment in southeastern Connecticut.

We urge you to take no action on these tax proposals and to support the non-profit industry recognizing the important work that agencies like Child & Family provide to the residents of this state.

Thank you for your attention.

Allison Blake, PhD MSW
Chief Executive Officer
Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut
255 Hempstead Street
New London, CT 06320
860-443-2896, ext 1404