

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

CHAIRPERSON: Senator Catherine A. Osten

SENATORS: Abrams, Lesser

REPRESENTATIVES: Lavielle, Baker, France,
Horn, Nolan, Pavalock-
D'Amato, Perone, Reyes,
Rosario, Rotella,
Zawistowski, Zupkus

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Sit all together, we have Brent Peterkin, Jeremy Stein, Kate Weaver -- you can sit between that table and this table, we'll have you all come up. We're not starting for four minutes but if you wanna get comfortable. And the young lady there with the headphones on can come up, too, if she wants. Or not.

Ready? All right. So good evening, Happy Valentine's Day to you all. Pleasure to see you all tonight.

First we have up Brent Peterkin. Do you -- are you all three doing separate testimonies or do you want to come up together?

Separate? Okay, Brent Peterkin, Project Longevity. You have three minutes. You've gotta hit that red button, there. That button so that it shows up on your mic. Right in front -- right on the microphone itself. This should be -- hit there. No, it should -- it'll show a red button at the top. There you go.

BRENT PETERKIN: There you go, all right. Good evening, members of the Appropriations Committee.

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My name is Brent Peterkin, I'm the state-wide Director with Project Longevity. I'd like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to speak before you today.

I'm here to oppose Governor Lamont, the Lamont administration's proposed cuts in funding for Project Longevity. Project Longevity is a group violence intervention initiative being implemented in Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven.

We focus on reducing street group and street gang gun violence in those cities. Project Longevity is 100 percent state funded. It's been implemented in the state of Connecticut since 2012.

Budgets communicate values, priorities, intentions and aspirations. And less than a year ago, the Connecticut General Assembly, this committee itself conveyed its values and proposed and appropriated an increase in Project Longevity's funding.

And the reason why I believe that occurred is that I believe the state legislature believed in the work that we do and they also believed in making sure that there was an investment in reducing gun violence in those three cities.

In less than a year, we're now faced with a \$250,000 dollar cut in our funding. I understand that the state is facing fiscal constraints but there are aspirations, there are reasons why we advocated for that funding and there's a reason why the General Assembly supported that funding.

There are a lot of initiatives that we were unable to execute within such a short period of time, there's a lot more work to be done.

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When we think about the investment that the state can make to save lives in these cities, we have to contrast that with the investments that were made by jurisdictions across the country. In fact, the city of Oakland has invested \$27 million dollars in reducing gun violence in its city. And its populations are comparable size to the three cities that I mentioned in aggregate. So if you combine Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven together, you'd get to the size of the city of Oakland.

But it pales in comparison -- it pales in comparison when you consider the investment that the state can make to do this work. This work that I think brings a significant return in investment. There's been an evaluation that's been done of Project Longevity by Yale University, the group violence intervention model has basically surpassed and survived all types of scrutiny.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Do you have a little bit more?

BRENT PETERKIN: A little bit more? Okay. So let me just get to the heart of the matter.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Yep.

BRENT PETERKIN: Yesterday I spoke of a young man who has been shot multiple times in the city of Bridgeport. A lot of times when we think about victims of gun violence, we don't really know their story. This is actually a young white male who grew up in PT Apartments who was bullied his entire life.

And it was that act of aggression and wickedness planted a seed of hatred in him and he turned to the streets. He ran with one of the most aggressive

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street groups in the city of PT and city of Bridgeport in the PT apartments. He's been incarcerated a number of times. He's only 26 years old.

He was shot last year multiple times in his abdomen. He's had to have pieces of his intestines and stomach removed. He'll be undergoing surgeries extensively throughout this year.

I met with him on Monday in Ansonia. He was filled with despair and we talked about his prospects in life. He told me he wants to start working again. He's worked in the construction trade but that would no longer be feasible for him given the extent of his injuries. We talked about different opportunities. He said to me he wants to get a CDL license.

We need to be able to meet those needs. We need to be able to continue to get out into the community to give people like this victim of gun injury hope and know that -- so that they know that there is an opportunity for them to pursue their own personal prosperity.

There are hundreds, literally hundreds of stories like this in all three cities that we operate in.

The goal of this funding increase that we asked the legislature for last year was to increase our capacity to do this very work. It also was to increase our ability -- or to create the ability -- for us to do work that complements the core model that focuses on violence reduction like create an opportunity for individuals to go to community college.

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In Hartford just a year ago, we were able to provide \$41,000 dollars in scholarships to Manchester Community College to people who've been impacted by gun violence in that city. So it's not just violence intervention, it's also about investing in opportunities that allow people to pursue a path towards personal prosperity.

To cut back on the funding now, prematurely, in less than a year with only five months after having access to our funding, I think, is -- it's not a pertinent decision for the state to make and I think it speaks to the values conveyed in the -- the proposed budget cuts -- as conveyed in the Governor -- by the Governor's administration.

I urge you and encourage you to stand in opposition to these proposed funding cuts and to support violence reduction in these cities.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): So my understanding is, Mr. Peterkin, is that the administration said part of the money was designated to go to Waterbury and that Waterbury did not want to receive the funding.

Do you know if that -- are you -- you're from Project Longevity, right? Are you the Executive Director?

BRENT PETERKIN: I am.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): And so do you know the story behind the Waterbury issue?

BRENT PETERKIN: Yes and no. So the advocacy for the Waterbury site didn't come from within Project Longevity. So we learned that Project Longevity, that Waterbury was included in the Office of Fiscal Analysis budget book.

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SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Right.

BRENT PETERKIN: Does not appear in the actual statute associated with funding for Project Longevity and that was interpreted as the will and intent of the legislature.

As far as we're concerned in Project Longevity, if communities are being harmed, if communities are facing incessant levels of gun violence and there's a need for our work in that community, we're willing to support that. However, there wasn't an antecedent, the antecedent, there wasn't any sort of activity or engagement that led to us -- led us to believe that people in Waterbury wanted this model.

So there were some grass roots organizations that we're familiar with that expressed some interest but local government and law enforcement did not have that aspiration. So we're not opposed to that, a Waterbury site, but the funding was allocated without their -- without any groundwork being put into place to cultivate that interest and then to develop a project plan and implementation plan.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): So you're not -- you're not opposed to helping out Waterbury but right now there doesn't appear to be a need and the money that was in -- that was -- that the Executive Branch is considering cutting, you believe you could still use within the three other towns.

BRENT PETERKIN: Yeah so when he advocated for the funding, Waterbury wasn't a consideration at that time. We had other aspirations that we spoke to, and other capacity build and needs that we spoke to. Waterbury became subsequent after the Governor signed the -- signed the budget into law and

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therefore given that consideration, we said, "Well, there's an expressed need, we're willing to support that. We're not gonna leave any community behind."

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): And also, you talked about funding some scholarships to community colleges, were those fulltime students? So if we do this debt-free college, that gives you some dollars that could be spent on other initiatives?

BRENT PETERKIN: They weren't fulltime students.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Oh, okay.

BRENT PETERKIN: Again, I don't know that -- I don't know much about the debt-free college initiative or that policy proposal.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): The fulltime -- it's for fulltime students.

BRENT PETERKIN: Yeah, so many of the guys that we interface with that are in the communities that we serve, we encourage them to also work fulltime at the same time so no one has taken more than three courses a semester.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Okay, great. Representative Reyes.

REP. REYES (75TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Sir, thank you very much for your testimony and I'm just -- through the Chair, I just for point of clarity, was just having a conversation with Representative Walker and there -- there's definitely some confusion about the -- the actual need for the money and the actual use for the money.

So the request was absolutely made and the gentleman is correct in that maybe some of the work was --

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that was needed to actually start a program wasn't in place. But Waterbury absolutely is in need of these type of services and we'll continue the conversation. I told Representative Walker that I would get back to her because I'm not sure who in Waterbury actually stated that these services were not needed because they absolutely are.

So thank you for advocating here tonight and thank you, Madam Chair.

BRENT PETERKIN: Thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Representative Rosario.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, Brent, welcome -- welcome here to the Capitol.

I just wanna speak about the work that you've done in Bridgeport Project Longevity. Just today, before I drove up to the Capitol we had two shootings. One was confirmed fatal and the other one, we're not sure if the young man's gonna make it.

So any cut whatsoever is literally gonna cost people their lives. And this happened today right down the street from where I was in a meeting at with a -- with a constituent.

So this is real. This isn't just numbers and, you know, stats. This is real. That's another wake I have to go to. I was telling Representative Reyes, I think I've gone to more wakes for people under the age of 25 than most legislators in this building. Probably in the country.

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So I stand in support of you, Project Longevity, and any program that helps get guns off the streets and keeps people safe. Thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Thank you. Representative Baker.

REP. BAKER (124TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for coming out here and your testimony.

Just a couple questions for you. In terms of the funding, you said that the monies that were allocated that you requested for was for three cities, is that correct?

BRENT PETERKIN: That is correct.

REP. BAKER (124TH): And now if you were cut, how would that affect in terms of the work that you're able to do?

BRENT PETERKIN: Sure. So it kinda speaks to some of the concerns expressed by Representative Rosario. When we had advocated for the funding increase, it was out of -- it was from a position of not being complacent. And the understanding that there was an existing and emergent need to further expand or to double down on our activities in Bridgeport and Water -- Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven -- and potentially even Waterbury.

That's what we wanted to do. That was the goal. And to cut our funding it pretty much prohibits us from doing that. We're a treatment to this issue of gun violence, we're not the cure.

And so when that -- using that sort of analogy, we were attempting to increase the dosage of the treatment. We wanted to do more work in these

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cities. We wanted to deepen our work, we wanted to add capacity. We wanted to be more engaged in the community. We wanted to do more outreach with the guys who are involved with street groups and street gangs. We didn't want to maintain the same level of performance, we wanted to improve upon it but that required capacity building.

And that's why we advocated for the funding. And if we cut the funding now then we're pretty much reversing on that trend and that aspiration.

REP. BAKER (124TH): Do you have data to support your efforts in terms of, you know, versus -- and I hate to use the analogy of somebody being killed versus not the homicides. Do you have data to support the efforts in your work in the various cities?

BRENT PETERKIN: Sure. So Yale University conducted an objective third-party evaluation of our Project Longevity New Haven initiative. They're currently undergoing an update to that evaluation right now. And I've also encouraged them and had a lot of conversations with them with conducting a similar evaluation for Bridgeport and I've also been in conversation with UConn to conduct an evaluation for Hartford and Bridgeport as well.

But when you also consider -- you know, I know that Representative Rosario refrained from using this sort of language and moving beyond dollars and cents.

But the reduction in why non-fatal or fatal shooting, you know, pretty much pays for this initiative in and of itself.

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Yes, but there is some data, there's some correlative data that I can see, too, but I can also refer you and just provide you with a copy of the Yale evaluation.

REP. BAKER (124TH): As you said earlier in your testimony that you -- it's 100 percent state funding. So you don't receive any other monies from the Feds or any outside organizations, donations or anything like that?

BRENT PETERKIN: No. So no money from the Federal government. We receive in-kind services to the US Attorney's office. Like prosecute -- prosecutorial support and office space and things of that nature.

As far as other sources of funding, sometimes we get people who will give us a donation and we'll give that to the fiscal agent who's administering the grant. But typically it's not a lot of money.

REP. BAKER (124TH): Okay. And how do -- how do you work in terms of your relationship working with law enforcement? What is your interaction with them in terms of with this program?

BRENT PETERKIN: Good question. So there are three facets to the Project Longevity model which is the group violence intervention model. There's a criminal justice facet, there's a support and outreach social services facet and then there's a community engagement facet which seeks to amplify the communities moral voice.

So on the criminal justice side of things, it's essentially a consortium of criminal justice agencies which is led by local police department -- the local police department -- and the US Attorney's

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office in partnership with ATF, DEA, FBI, State parole, State probation, Federal parole, State Prosecutor's office and of course the police department for that city.

Our relationship with this party I think is in good standing. This initiative requires us to work very closely and intently with law enforcement so pretty much every day of the week I'm in correspondence with police departments and officers and our Project Managers are with those police departments respectively on a daily basis.

It's driven by law enforcement intelligence. So a lot of what we know what's going on the streets and that doesn't just come from people in the community who express concerns or need to us, we also hear a lot about what's going on in the community through law enforcement.

REP. BAKER (124TH): Well, thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Are there any other comments or questions? Seeing none, thank you so much. We all think the program's good, so.

BRENT PETERKIN: Thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Up next is Jeremy Stein, Project Longevity. Go ahead, Jeremy.

JEREMY STEIN: Thank you. Happy Valentine's Day, everyone. Chairperson Osten, ranking member Lavielle, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

Just a couple of things. I'm here to support Brent's plea for greater funding for Project Longevity. Project Longevity has been identified by

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experts across the country as being one of the most effective ways to reduce community-level gun violence. Some of these things I'm going to tell you, you probably already know and may have already heard from me on other occasions.

As you know, I'm the Executive Director of Connecticut Against Gun Violence. On average, someone is shot with a gun in Connecticut every day and every other day someone is killed.

From 2008 through 2017, 1916 people were killed with guns in Connecticut. And the burden of gun violence in Connecticut falls disproportionately on communities of color and in places like New Haven, Bridgeport and right here in Hartford.

It is staggering to think that approximately 56 percent of the state's gun homicide victims are black. However, only ten percent of the state's population is black. And Latinx make up close to 14 percent of the state's population yet they account for approximately 23 percent of gun homicide victims in the state.

So only a small handful of states, including Connecticut, have really concentrated on efforts like Project Longevity and making much-needed investments in evidence-based violence prevention and intervention programs.

And there is a critical need to expand and scale upon these programs the state-level support for programs that are most effective at saving lives.

With a total cost of gun violence estimated in America as \$229 billion dollars each year and here in Connecticut it's estimated as being \$1.2 billion

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dollars so we're already paying for gun violence. It is important that we take this -- these projects which are really a smart economic investment as well.

So in Connecticut, the combined gun violence rates have dropped by more than 50 percent in the three major cities since 2011 with help from state-funded violence intervention programs like Project Longevity.

And the total cost of less than a million dollars per year, this program has prevented shootings while generating an annual savings of seven million dollars.

And as Mr. Peterkin had said earlier, a Yale study showed that Connecticut's Project Longevity led to 55 fewer shootings per year in New Haven, representing millions of dollars in savings for taxpayers.

And most recently, I looked at the New Haven stats from their Conn-stat [phonetic] reports and when Project Longevity was fully funded last year, it wasn't funded -- well, the year before -- but this last year, we were able to get reductions in shots fired by 49.5 percent, assaults with firearms decreased 56 percent. Robberies with firearms decreased 18.9 percent and murders decreased by 20 percent.

So considering that law enforcement and healthcare costs alone associated with a single gun-related homicide are \$488,000 dollars and more than \$71,000 dollars for each non-fatal shooting, many gun violence victims don't have the insurance to pay for it. As a result, a \$1 million dollar investment

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that leads to the prevention of just three gun homicides pays for itself and then some.

We respectfully ask that this committee recommend the full funding of Project Longevity. Our lives depend on it. Thank you very much.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Thank you. Are there any comments or questions? Nope? Thank you so much.

Up next is Kate Weaver. Kate, does your daughter wanna come up, too?

KATE WEAVER: She said she wanted to come listen but [laughter] she's been waiting all week to watch that iPad. [Laughter]

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): We are all appreciative of her listening skills. [Laughter] Go ahead, Kate.

KATE WEAVER: Thank you very much. My name is Kate Weaver, I live in West Hartford with my husband and my two children and I'm here representing Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. Hopefully our red shirts are starting to become very familiar to all of you here.

So I work with a team of very dedicated moms who are really doing everything we can to address the epidemic of gun violence across the country but we're also working very hard to address the epidemic in our own state.

I was here at a press conference yesterday and I acknowledge I sit here from a position of privilege. My daughter doesn't worry about walking to the school bus in the morning. I don't worry about the safety of my two children.

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However, I'm a lifelong Connecticut resident. I went to college in the state of Connecticut as well. So I care very deeply for our state. And at that press conference yesterday somebody said we have small cities with big city problems. And I feel very strongly that if we work together with amazing groups like Brent's Project Longevity, other lifesaving intervention techniques, we can really address this problem in our small state.

So I'm here to urge you all. As I mentioned, I'm one of thousands of moms across the state that wear the red shirt and flood the Capitol. In April of last year we had Connecticut's first advocacy day. Over 100 moms from all over the state took the day off of work, put their kids with grandparents and other babysitters so that they could come here and speak on behalf of three of the gun bills that were addressed last year as well as refunding Project Longevity.

From what we understand, the Project Longevity was funded in June to \$998,750 dollars. Many thanks to this committee for, you know, working with us on that and we're just urging the committee to honor that commitment that was made in June.

I really appreciate the tagline for Project Longevity -- "Together We Will Save Lives" and I think other representatives said it already. There is a financial cost to the loss of life in this state. As Brent mentioned, if we can save just two lives, this program pays for itself and I don't think we can underestimate the power of these intervention techniques.

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Jeremy touched on the numbers, I've got some numbers here, too, from every town for gun safety. I don't think this committee needs to hear the numbers, I think that we all have kind of seen the research and read the research but I'm just here on behalf of all of Moms Demand Action, especially the volunteers in our state, to thank Brent for his service and to thank all of you for this consideration.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): So I don't know if you want to interrupt your daughter's listening skills but if she wants to come up and speak, she's certainly welcome to it.

KATE WEAVER: Holly, do you want to come talk in the microphone?

[Laughter]

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): I figured I could offer. Are there any comments or questions? Representative Lavielle followed by Representative Rosario.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Good evening, I wanted to wait till the three of you were finished but I -- I wanna thank you all for first what you do. I know Jeremy and I know the Moms Demand Action people down in Fairfield County and -- very well.

And so I thank you all for coming here at 5:30 on Valentine's Day to talk to us. And it's -- it truly, it's a -- it is a mystery why we have so much of this in -- in Connecticut and in this country as, you know.

And I think that focusing on a problem this severe and this horrible, it's -- it's more than you can ask for this many volunteers and yet you're doing it and of course Project Longevity is -- is a -- one of

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the beneficiaries of that work and the whole program is a great program and I wish it much success, I think.

I just wanted to compliment you and thank you and I don't have any questions. I think it's pretty straightforward.

KATE WEAVER: Thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Representative Rosario.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you for your testimony and you -- you stirred up some emotions in me. Some people know this but my -- one of my first cousins, Genesis Rodriguez was taken by gun violence and his murder is actually still unsolved.

And when I decided to run for office in 2014, I actually started my campaign canvassing the same street, same corner where his life was taken. And it's a wound that doesn't heal. I still remember him and our memories like yesterday. So just know that your work is going a long way to make sure other families don't experience that and everyone here sitting in the front row. So thank you.

KATE WEAVER: Thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): So I know there were other hands that went up, I don't know if anybody else has anything to say. I just didn't get you all. Representative Horn.

REP. HORN (64TH): I just want to add my voice to all three of you as Representative Lavielle said at the close of all your testimony because yes, Mom Demand -- Moms Demand Action tee-shirts have become

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a familiar thing here and I have spoken often about the power of that movement and the -- that sea of red that we see in the gallery above us in the chamber and it really makes a difference and that goes for Connecticut Against Gun Violence as well. Orange also a good color.

And of course Brent's work which is exactly at the heart of what we are all -- you are all advocating for here every day. So I am -- I join my colleagues in support of everything you are doing and I thank you for -- as Representative Rosario puts a very, you know, specific point on what this means. This is real, it's not numbers, it's not theoretical. And it is, you know, tearing at our community. So I thank you for your work.

KATE WEAVER: Thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Any other comments or questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

KATE WEAVER: Thank you very much.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Next time we'll get her up here.

KATE WEAVER: Yeah. [Laughter]

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Next up is Kevin Allverez, Municipal Aid, City of New Haven. Are you speaking for all cities tonight, Kevin?

KEVIN ALLVEREZ: I hope so. Madam Chair, members of the Committee, thank you for having me, thank you for being here. I'm sure you're all thrilled to be here with me on Valentine's Day.

I'm going to be reading testimony on behalf of Mayor Justin Elicker for the City of New Haven. My name

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is Kevin Allvarez, Director of Legislative Affairs for the city. But this is Justin's testimony today.

As you all know, even in lieu of taxes our PILOT provides funding to municipalities to compensate them for part of the tax revenue that they lose on either for hosting major tax exempt colleges and hospitals or state-owned property.

It was intended to lessen the financial burden that non-taxable property places on the residence of a municipality. You also know that PILOT has never been close to full funding, keeping the pressure on cities like New Haven to dramatically increase their taxes and make deep cuts into their basic operating budgets.

In years past, New Haven has received between 33 and 38 percent of their statutory funding amount. Currently we're receiving 26 percent. Every percentage point we move away from full funding has real consequences. It is a child who no longer has access to an afterschool program. A mother who has to work -- walk to work because the bus system is getting slower. A person struggling with addiction who can't get the treatment they desperately need. It is a city feeling like its government is leaving them behind when staff layoffs mean their phone calls go unanswered.

For those who think this is a challenge limited to big cities, it is far from it. Griswold, Ansonia, Mansfield, Vernon, East Hartford, Sprague and towns of all sizes across our state struggle with lack of PILOT dollars and grant lists that can't make up to that. While programs like MRSA or ECS grants take

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town need into account, why does PILOT fail to do so?

I grew up in New Canaan. I didn't actually grow up in New Canaan but the mayor did. Where my parents still live to this day. The household median income of New Canaan is about five times that of New Haven. Their per capita taxable property is seven times that of New Haven. And as such, their tax rate is less than half of ours.

I recognize the reality of a property tax-based system in that the poorest residents of our state will pay the highest tax rates. My question, though, is why would we subsidize towns like New Canaan which had a substantial enough property tax base to keep their tax rate at some of the lowest in the state particularly in light of the consistent underfunding of PILOT, why can't we create a more equitable funding mechanism for the towns most in need?

I am asking the General Assembly to retool the current PILOT formula for both college and hospital and state-owned property to take into account the need of a municipality and the allocation of funds. The financial impact on the city of New Haven's operating budget is nothing compared to the toll it takes on our residents.

We have to be honest about that reality and work together to solve it. While we obviously hope PILOT can be fully funded, we also recognize that this is an even greater challenge for the state.

While it remains underfunded, however, the residents of New Haven and the people of Connecticut cannot afford the state to allocate the limited funds it

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has blindly and without respect to where the dollars will have the greatest impact.

I am committed to working with all of you this session to achieve a more thoughtful, equitable and effective system of allocating PILOT dollars. Thank you all very much.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Thank you and as you know, last year we did a little bit of work on PILOT and this year have been doing a lot of work on PILOT to see where we could get extra dollars that would actually fill in the gaps so what is supposed to be fully funded PILOT to address some of the issues and I don't think that everybody around here -- I know most people around here know that -- that 57 percent of New Haven is tax exempt, therefore requiring 43 percent of the rest of the town to take on the cost of the whole town.

So I think that's something that we should recognize, so 41 percent from New London, 51 percent for Hartford and so I think we have a lot of work to do.

Does anybody have any questions? Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Good evening. I -- I just was -- wanted to ask for clarification what you were -- because when you -- when you brought up New Canaan and New Haven, what were you suggesting exactly should happen.

KEVIN ALLVEREZ: So -- so what I think is -- what we're trying to figure out and what I think is a somewhat clear solution to the problem is to weigh

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the need of a city or the resources that it has with the amount of allocation that it receives.

For a place like Greenwich or New Haven -- I'm sorry, I mean New Canaan -- where there is an enormous -- there -- the equalize in Greenwich is an enormous per capita in reducing the amount of money in a revenue neutral way because I think we would much prefer it best be fully funded.

But if we're trying to be revenue neutral, reducing the amount that the state is allocating to the wealthiest towns that we have to increase the amount that is going to where it will have the greatest impact.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): The reason I -- thank you, the reason I asked the question was I wanted to make sure you were referring only to PILOT because the -- many of the small towns don't receive any PILOT funds.

KEVIN ALLVEREZ: Many small towns don't but many of them also do. And even though it's a small dollar amount, so some of them that I mentioned -- Sprague or Griswold or New London which is a smaller city. But even if they're receiving not a huge amount of money, that money will have a much more significant impact on their annual budget than it will in another location. Or another municipality.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Oh, I just wanted to make sure I understood because I -- as I recall, New Canaan is next door to my town and I don't think they get any PILOT but yeah. I may be mistaken. It was just for -- just for clarification. Thank you.

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SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): I'll have a map for the Committee, too, that will show where PILOT is paid out.

KEVIN ALLVEREZ: And projected for fiscal year 20, I believe, it was \$101,000 dollars was what was projected for it. For New Canaan, specifically. And that's not a big number compared to the PILOT more broadly. I think the top third of PILOT recipients receive somewhere in the area of -- I believe it's \$7 million dollars, I will get you those figures.

But and more broadly than that just the impact that it would have in freeing up more funding for towns in need.

Thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

KEVIN ALLVEREZ: Thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Enjoy Valentine's Day.

KEVIN ALLVEREZ: You as well.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Travis Woodward is up next. In-Source -- In-Sourcing Savings, CSEA. Do the girls wanna come up? Girls, do you want to come up and sit with your dad? Come on up. We always try to get young people involved.

TRAVIS WOODWARD: They're embarrassed of their daddy.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): That's all right. That's all right.

TRAVIS WOODWARD: Bad kids.

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SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): They're probably not -- they won't be very embarrassed. It's when they turn -- oh, you might have one teenager there. When they're teenagers, they're really embarrassed of their parents.

Go ahead, Travis.

TRAVIS WOODWARD: Senator Osten, members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Travis Woodward, I'm an Engineer with the Connecticut Department of Transportation. I'm also President of CSEA, SCIU Local 2001 P-4 Counsel, a bargaining unit which includes our state's engineers, scientists and information technology professionals.

I'd like to highlight the dangerous understaffing at DOT. While we were once a robust agency of over 5000 employees, we have since been cut to the bone. There are currently around 2700 employees at DOT, 20 percent of whom will be eligible to retire in 2022. There are currently no succession plans in place to hire ahead of this exodus or balance the current attrition levels.

One of the critical services our engineers provide is oversight and inspection of the construction of our roads and bridges. Our priorities are keeping the roads safe and contractors honest.

When we don't have enough staff to perform these duties, our work is outsourced to high-priced for-profit companies, many of which do not even -- are not even based in Connecticut.

Having a no-bid consultant oversee a low-bid contractor is quite literally the fox guarding the hen house. When these construction contracts run

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over their allotted contract time, these private consulting engineers are rewarded with their own contract extensions.

I would also like to dispel the rumor that these consultant companies are to temporarily supplement the state workforce. We have consultants that have made their 30-plus year careers moving from state project to state project all while costing taxpayers 56 to 63 percent more than their in-house state employee counterparts.

Massive cost savings can be achieved if the work currently privatized by DOT is brought in-house. DOT's own latest reports indicate savings of close to \$100 million dollars annually. State employees do this work better, faster and for less while also protecting the safety of our residents and motorists.

As state employees, we put public safety first while these consultants put profits first. You may have heard of the I-84 little dig in the mid 2000's with the drainage going to nowhere. However, a bigger concern should be FIGG -- FIGG engineers from Florida.

Last summer, OSHA released a report citing FIGG as responsible for the Florida International University pedestrian bridge collapse which killed six people.

FIGG engineers ignored abnormal cracking of the structure and put profits first. Why should that hit home? FIGG engineers have been awarded the oversight and inspection of the Arrigoni Bridge reconstruction in Middletown set to begin at the end of this month, February.

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We believe it is important to have highly trained engineers with the public's best interest at heart and you are not going to get that by outsourcing to a company focused on its profits.

Help us end this practice of the fox watching the henhouse.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Okay girls, now you have to identify yourself and say what school you go to.

TRAVIS WOODWARD: Name and school.

MAYA WOODWARD: Maya and I go to [Inaudible 00:40:23].

TRAVIS WOODWARD: In Hamden.

MAYA WOODWARD: In Hamden.

LAURA WOODWARD: Laura and I go to Hamden Middle School.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Very nice, thank you for coming up with your dad. Does anybody have any questions? Representative Perone.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Thank you very much for your testimony. All the way through it, I was certainly tracking, you know, what I had heard and it's all very consistent with what you've been saying.

Just like the attrition rate versus the inflow of new engineers is going in the wrong direction. The numbers are pretty hideous, plus the fact that you have a situation where you might have somebody come on to DOT for a couple years and then take something in the private sector and just make more money than be a consultant.

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But then we got to the end of what you had to say and then I became absolutely horrified so do me a favor. I mean, walk me through some of those named. Who -- how is -- how is it -- are these people based in Florida or are they based in Connecticut and they're working for a Florida firm? How are they credentialed, how are they able to oversee a project here if -- and just walk me through that process.

TRAVIS WOODWARD: Well, a lot of them are conglomerates. They start out in other states and then they branch out to other states.

So FIGG Engineers is based in Florida but they set up shop in whatever state that they could get prequalified for work. Once they're prequalified and they're on the list for DOT, they make people available and then when these jobs become available or put out -- I guess the RFP process -- they go in and they get interviewed and then they get the jobs.

So they'll set up a shop in Connecticut, they'll have a nice clean office here but they're based out of Florida.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Okay. Well certainly something like that, I think, you know, should follow up on more internally but -- but it will happen.

The other question I have is, I mean, because it's so endemic and then everything that's happening, there's a lot of consultant work that's being done, how do you -- what kind of timeframe do you think or what would it take to actually begin reversing that process?

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Or frankly, you know, how do you make an entity like the DOT more competitive in terms of retention because retention is a big part of this. You know, the people do have, you know, other options as soon as they get some experience.

So I -- what the -- along those lines, I mean has any of that been talked about? Like what incentivizes an engineer to stay at the DOT?

TRAVIS WOODWARD: So we have an OJE process through our contract through DAS and DAS is supposed to look at our job specs every five years to look for nuances and check the pay scales.

In 25 years we've done two objective job evaluations through DAS so I mean they're gonna say they're understaffed but to be honest, they just don't look at it. Our last OJE was 2008 and that incorporated some major changes. That's when we got 40-hour work weeks, that's when we got some pay increases to be competitive with the private sector. Unfortunately our raises are pretty much every other year since 2008. So we're falling behind again.

Add to that our recruitment's been outsourced to DAS Jobaps and a lot of college students aren't drawn to Jobaps. It's not explained to them this is the process for getting hired.

So we don't have a robust recruitment program, we don't have flyers and sheets and -- like we used to where you'd go out to all the area engineering schools and do recruitment.

So the ones coming in -- same thing, are with this new Tier Four coming in, engineers are coming in with the promised salary but they're getting ten

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percent taken right off the top for their pension and their medical.

Tier Four employees is pretty much self-funded but it's coming from the employee.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Okay. Excellent answers, thank you very much and some other people probably want to ask you some things, too. Thank you for your testimony.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Any other comments or questions? I think you'd get more questions but it's Valentine's Day. Just sayin'.

REP. PERONE (137TH): Well, we're going to the Wolfpack game, too, so we appreciate the brevity.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): All right, good. Nice Valentine's Day. You have fun.

I think that's it. Is there anybody else here? This is -- this statement is for Liz. Is there anybody else here that would like to testify tonight? Is there anybody -- no, Brandon, you can't.

Is there anybody else here that would like to testify tonight? [Laughter] Is there anybody else here that would like to testify tonight? Seeing none, this public hearing is closed. I hope you all enjoy the night.