

Kevin Lamkins

Professor of English, Capital Community College

221 Newington Road, West Hartford, CT

Testimony concerning the follow bills:

HB 6187 An Act Concerning the Restructuring of Certain Taxes and Equity

SB 821 An Act Concerning the Reformation of Certain Taxes and Tax Equity

Greetings, Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon, Senator Martin, Representative Cheeseman, and the distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. I hope you and your loved ones are safe and healthy. My name is Kevin Lamkins. I live in West Hartford and I'm also member of the 4Cs, SEIU Local 1973 and the Recovery for All coalition. I am testifying in strong support of HB 6187 and SB 821.

While it's easy to see how the past year has been difficult for poor, working, and middle class people, the reality is that we've been struggling even before COVID 19. The pandemic has only made things worse and exposed many of the flaws in our state's (and nation's) economic system. It's time that we address Connecticut's deep economic disparities. We have an opportunity here to reset, to fundamentally change Connecticut's way of caring for the most vulnerable, for accessing the tremendous resources both material and intangible available to us, and to come out of this pandemic a stronger state and society. I believe a more equitable tax structure is a great step in that direction.

Pandemic or no pandemic, every semester I see the debilitating effects of poverty and economic disparity in our state. My school, Capital Community College, serves some of the most impoverished people in the state, most of whom come from Hartford and its metro area. Many are also recent immigrants who find limited opportunities here. These stories have not changed because of COVID 19:

- Students choosing work over school, often missing classes to pick up necessary hours, or dropping out altogether if they get a full time job or a second job to make ends meet.
- Students who have trouble paying bills such as rent or utilities or cell phone service.
- Students who don't have basic technology at home that many of us take for granted and consider necessities: high speed internet, printers, even computers; this digital divide has become even more evident during the pandemic.
- Our ever-expanding food bank at Capital Community College because so many students, again even pre-pandemic, can't afford all the food they need for their families
- Students winding up in the hospital because of inadequate health care coverage, either because their health conditions get worse due to lack of care, or because they can't be turned away at the emergency room.
- Students who disappear from school for a whole host of other reasons too numerous to list here, and frustratingly, I often don't even know the reasons.

I've taught full time at Capital for 13 years now, and several years more as an adjunct. These stories happen *every semester*. They are the stories of disparity, of concentrated poverty, of intergenerational poverty. It is heartbreaking to work at an institution whose primary mission is access to higher education for all, yet so much of that accessibility is beyond our control.

But, a lot of this is within *your* control, the CT General Assembly. You can make our state more equitable. You can create a more progressive tax structure so that the vast wealth of our state can be put into the common good. The common good benefits everyone, even those with means. The common good means healthier people, more educated people, less crime, it means helping everyone reach their potential.

We can do this. It is time.

I urge the Committee to pass HB 6187 and SB 821. Thank you for considering this testimony. Stay safe!