

Rev. Josh Pawelek
Minister, Unitarian Universalist Society: East, Manchester
Leader, Recovery for All Campaign
Testimony in Support of
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

Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon, distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee: I am the Rev. Josh Pawelek, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Society: East in Manchester, a leader with the Recovery for All Campaign, and a resident of Glastonbury. I speak in support for HB 6187 and SB 821.

Each of you has heard a variety of pleas for help from constituents during these past 12 months—often desperate pleas for help from small businesses, essential workers, healthcare, nursing home, rest stop, grocery store, and domestic workers. Renters, poor people, low-income people, undocumented people, people seeking health care, mental health resources, addiction resources, teachers, students and their parents, elders. The suffering and the need have been immense.

You are also aware that most of these needs existed prior to the pandemic, and are rooted in long-standing, historical race- and class-based disparities. The pandemic has made these disparities worse, and far more visible.

We need a recovery for all, not only from the pandemic, but from the these crushing disparities. The needs are enormous: affordable, quality, culturally-sensitive health care—including a public option, HUSKY for undocumented people who qualify; rent relief; affordable housing; fixing the ECS formula so that public schools thrive in every Connecticut community; closing the funding gaps for community colleges, our state university system, UCONN and UCONN Health; expanding resources for mental health and addiction services, expanding re-entry services, and increasing funding for DOL to address domestic worker rights. These are only a few critical, pressing needs. I'm sure each of you—without even thinking about it—could easily identify ten unmet social, economic or health needs rooted in long-standing race-based and class-based disparities that cry out for funding now; and the answer, as long as we take the wrong path of austerity budgeting, is *NO!*

Significant federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan will close some gaps this year. But those dollars are temporary and will disappear. They won't enable us to make the long-term investments in our communities and our people that will address decades of race and class inequity. Drawing on the rainy day fund can help, but that too is not a permanent solution. And in the next biennium we will be right back where we were before the pandemic, without the revenue to invest in our future.

The Recovery for All Campaign and our legislative champions who make up one quarter of the legislature, are proposing over \$3 billion in new permanent revenues, along with significant tax relief for working and middle-class families. No tricks. No gimmicks. New, reliable, sustainable revenues from those who can best afford it, the state's wealthiest citizens and highest earners who have prospered during the pandemic.

We can allow the suffering and the need to continue. We can allow the racism and the classism built into our systems to continue. Or we can ask those who have profited the most to show their Connecticut spirit, and pay their fair share.

Austerity constrains recovery. Investment budgeting spurs recovery for all. The choice is clear. I hope you agree.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Josh Pawelek