



Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee
March 15, 2021

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

Dear Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon, and the distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, I am State Representative Brian T. Smith of the 48th District and I writing today to express my support for both HB 6187 An Act Concerning the Restructuring of Certain Taxes and Equity, of which I am a co-introducer, and SB 821 An Act Concerning the Reformation of Certain Taxes and Tax Equity.

There are few who know better than the members of the Connecticut Legislature just how painful a struggle the past year has been for so many Connecticut families, including my constituents. While I, and I expect many of you, may have felt that the social safety net created over the last eight decades has been good policy and was up to the task of protecting our most at-risk citizens, the COVID pandemic has shown this to be false.

The scope of the economic shutdown caused by the pandemic showed us how many of our neighbors truly live on the edge of economic chaos, just weeks or even days away from catastrophe if anything were to upset their delicate financial balance. As the crisis deepened last spring, the number of Connecticut's citizens finding themselves in dire financial straits increased dramatically week after week and the systems built to be the backbone of the safety net fell far short of the task. This further exposed, and exacerbated, our state's wide economic disparities, pushing many families to the brink of desperation.

Today, a full year after the beginning of the pandemic, our state's unemployment rate is still above eight percent, with almost 200,000 Connecticut residents remaining out of work. Ten percent of households (223,000) don't have enough to eat and twenty percent of parents report that their children (174,000) don't have enough to eat. Eighteen percent (146,000) of tenants are behind in their rent and face imminent eviction.

I wonder how many of us in the legislature really understand what these numbers mean; what the cost of not rising to the moment and not fully meeting the needs of all of Connecticut's citizens will mean. I do. Nearly 50 years ago, the convergence of medical bills, debt, bouts of unemployment, and social factors, resulted in my family losing our home when I was 15. My parents split up and my siblings and I were mostly separated for 5 months, staying with other families, and only rarely seeing each other or either of our parents. That experience affects me still.

We have the chance, now, to do something to make it better for struggling families. The actions we take to help Connecticut families overcome the damage done by the pandemic today can also help establish better systems and a tighter safety net to help the families of tomorrow.

The residents we represent are suffering and we have a responsibility to do everything in our power to stop that suffering now and for the future. We need to do more to meet this moment. We are engulfed in the greatest crisis our state, and our country, has seen in 100 years and we must be bold. We must ensure that the people of Connecticut emerge from this pandemic and thrive, not struggle, because if they struggle so will our economy, extending the pandemic-induced recession and worsening income inequality and economic disparities for generations to come.

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We need a budget that invests in our residents by funding essential services, reducing economic and racial inequality, and setting our state on a path to a robust economic recovery. That is why I am here before you today, to add my support to HB 6187 and SB 821 and to urge you to do the same. These bills will provide the revenue required to fund the critical investments needed for a strong and equitable Connecticut recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Smith", written in a cursive style.

Brian T. Smith
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