



Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, March 15, 2021

Testimony submitted by Robin Lamott Sparks, Executive Director  
End Hunger Connecticut!

H.B. 6187 An Act Concerning the Restructuring of Certain Taxes and Equity  
S.B. 821 An Act Concerning the Reformation of Certain Taxes and Tax Equity

As the Executive Director of End Hunger Connecticut! and a member of the Recovery for All coalition, I am writing in strong support of H.B. 6187 and S.B. 821. We agree with our fellow coalition members that this year has been a painful struggle for so many Connecticut families. The COVID pandemic has further exposed and exacerbated Connecticut's deep economic disparities and pushed many to the brink of desperation. The scale of this crisis demands a bold response—people are suffering and our state has a responsibility to meet the needs of our residents.

We live in the wealthiest state in the country and yet Connecticut has one of the highest rates of income inequality in the United States. This inequality is evidenced by the drastic increase in food insecurity experienced by our residents since the onset of the pandemic. As a leading statewide anti-hunger nonprofit, we run a SNAP Call Center that assists community members with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Before the pandemic, our call center handled 400 calls a month. However last August, we were getting 100 calls a day from families needing support. And, from December 2020 to this past January, we handled over 3,000 requests for assistance.

The Recovery for All coalition anticipates these bills would generate much needed revenue to help support the most vulnerable of Connecticut's residents. By addressing inequitable tax structures, the state will generate the necessary funds to invest in and expand social services, education, while also providing economic relief for the lower and middle class. We joined this coalition because we believe that everyone in Connecticut deserves equal access to basic human needs such as nutritious food. During this critical moment in history, we fear that if we do not take drastic measures to assure equitable funding and support for struggling lower and middle-class residents, many of our community members will continue to experience high levels of food insecurity in the years to come. Now is the time to enact powerful change and address inequalities in a meaningful and pointed way.

By making the proposed taxation changes in these two bills, you will help create an economy that works for more people in Connecticut. At EHC! we know that hunger is an economic issue and when more people have more access to economic and educational opportunities, we can create an environment in which people are healthier and self-sufficient. These proposed bills lift residents that have experienced food insecurity and inequality, ultimately allowing communities to thrive under a more equitable economic foundation.

We have an unprecedented opportunity to stop the hurt so many families are feeling by funding essential services, reducing economic and racial inequality, and setting our state on a path to robust economic recovery by restoring fairness to our tax code. EHC! wants to see a hunger-free Connecticut in which everyone can access healthy and nutritious food of their choice. We believe these bills are a step towards this goal and we urge you, as a member of the Recovery for All coalition, to pass H.B. 6187 and S.B. 821.

Thank you for considering this testimony and your willingness to fight for the needs of all people in Connecticut.