

February 16, 2021

RE: S.B. No. 873

Dear Co-chairs Fonfara and Scanlon, Vice Chairs, Ranking Members, and other Members of this Committee:

As a New Haven property owner and resident who lives and also works in New Haven, **I am writing to communicate my support for SB 873, AN ACT MITIGATING ADVERSE TAX CONSEQUENCES RESULTING FROM EMPLOYEES WORKING REMOTELY DURING COVID-19, AND CONCERNING THE REMOVAL OF LIENS ON THE PROPERTY OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE BENEFICIARIES AND A THREE-TIERED GRANTS IN LIEU OF TAXES PROGRAM.**

In particular, I am writing to support the proposed modifications to improve PILOT to a need-based three-tiered PILOT system. With over half of the property in New Haven not taxable and the historical underfunding of PILOT, it has and continues to hamstring the municipality's ability to properly provide adequate services and to perform even basic maintenance on things like city infrastructure. This is the case not only in most of Connecticut's larger cities like New Haven, but also in smaller municipalities such as New London that contain regional, yet property-tax-exempt, assets such as universities, hospitals, non-profits and also land-intense regional infrastructure like interstate highway interchanges. In New Haven, for example, a large number of properties in the Wooster Square neighborhood, perhaps around one-third of that neighborhood, were usurped/demolished/removed from the Grand List when I-91, I-95 and the interchange of these two interstate highways were put decades ago. Of course, the largest non-taxable entities in New Haven are Yale University and Yale-New Haven Hospital who are major property owners.

Connecticut may never thrive if its biggest cities and also smaller yet key municipalities are underfunded. As we are well into the 21st Century, it is these places that are and will continue to be the economic drivers for our state if we allow them to be. As a result of the continually underfunded PILOT program, the mill rate on remaining tax-paying properties is higher than it otherwise would be – hampering progress. Moreover, when basic infrastructure maintenance lags due to underfunding, such as to replace old traffic signals and to make traffic safety improvements to outdated roadway infrastructure, our safety is impacted. All in all, Connecticut's recovery coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic will suffer without proper funding of PILOT.

Therefore, I support SB 873 and urge you to support this as well.

Sincerely,

Neil Olinski
Lighthouse Road
New Haven, CT