



**Testimony of Jan Hochadel
President, AFT CT**

SB 821: AN ACT CONCERNING THE REFORMATION OF CERTAIN TAXES AND TAX EQUITY.

**Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee
March 15, 2021**

Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon, and members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee: I am Jan Hochadel, President of AFT Connecticut and a member of the Recovery for All Coalition. We are a diverse union of 30,000 members in education, healthcare, and state service. It is on their behalf I am testifying.

When the pandemic first hit and caused the closing of schools one year ago, we at AFT Connecticut were most concerned about our paraeducators and other support staff, many of whom have contracts that allow for irregular scheduling and, unlike the teachers, are paid hourly and not yearly. We thank Governor Lamont's administration for working with us so these hardworking members of our school communities would be paid for the remainder of the year. This school year, they have been able mostly to keep their regular hours as districts have negotiated the demands of pandemic schooling. Many Connecticut employees who do not have labor advocates working on their behalf have not been as fortunate. People in the service industry, people who work in retail or small business, and working people throughout Connecticut have seen their finances and their lives devastated by the pandemic.

SB 821: An Act Concerning the Reformation of Certain Taxes and Tax Equity is an important step to begin addressing the disparate financial impact of COVID 19.

Connecticut often proudly boasts of being the wealthiest state in the country. We speak less often of having the highest levels of income inequality in the country. There are two Connecticuts, separated by wealth and, far too often, race. The pandemic has only exacerbated this disparity. People who live paycheck to paycheck have seen those paychecks shrink or disappear, and the usual economic anxiety has become economic panic. Meanwhile, people whose wealth is tied to the stock market have thrived at unprecedented levels. Senate Bill 821 provides a lifeline to many of our most vulnerable citizens. The tax credits and direct payment will allow many people to provide sufficient food and clothing for their children, pay overdue bills, and give some relief from the worry that grips them. It is a small but necessary step to address the financial problems the last year has caused. It will be a positive step for Connecticut's economy, but more importantly it will be a needed help for our fellow citizens and neighbors.

My fellow labor leaders and I have often testified to the need for policies that bridge the two Connecticut, usually to no avail. Covid has moved those arguments from political discourse to personal survival. While we work for our members, we cannot ignore the working people of Connecticut who have no one working on their behalf. The steps taken in Senate Bill 821 are small but necessary. We will still have two Connecticut, but this bill is a step to address the basic needs of the most vulnerable part of Connecticut. I want to thank the sponsors of this bill, and I strongly urge its adoption.

Thank you.