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Dear Senators and Representatives,

Thank you for the opportunity to present my thoughts to you today. I want to thank my clients and staff for rearranging their schedules to accommodate this appearance. While many of you know that I am the Chair of the Glastonbury Town Council and Chair of the Capitol Region Council of Governments, my thoughts today are entirely my own and do not necessarily represent any other organization.

As a Veterinarian, I oppose SB 946 as presented as it includes a sales tax on Veterinary medicine services. I believe that the bill hurts our most vulnerable human population. Most days I see clients whose only regular contact is with their pets -- they are very old seniors living by themselves. The other group we see are the pets of children that have learning and emotional disabilities, many of whom respond better to animals than people. I will always remember the early intervention class my son attended that I brought our dog to show to the class. I put my stethoscope over the heart to let all the kids listen; one child started jabbering away so excited, yet the teacher said he rarely spoke and was often isolated from his peers. Many clients have therapy animals for hospitals, so after 40 years of research about the human animal bond and the benefit to human mental health our legislature in its wisdom now decides that we should put obstacles in the way of these cost effective, self-directed aids in treatment so that our overburdened education and mental health systems have more work and less tools? That strikes me as the definition of penny wise and pound foolish.

Yet, my main worry is not veterinary medicine; it is the culture that brought forth this proposal. A culture that fails to recognize the problem is aggregate spending, not revenue. A culture that says we can pick on the small and the weak to benefit various special interests that gorge at the public trough.

The recently released CT Knowledge Corridor Growth Business Study points out how the vast majority of hiring is in firms with 10 to 99 employees. Many of these are pass-through companies. The leading limitation on expansion described in the study is the cost of being in business. Those costs are most influenced by the accumulation of taxes and regulatory compliance costs from state government.

SB 946 does nothing to lower the cost of business and improve job creation. When we do not grow and there is limited hiring, who is hurt? Mostly 20 something graduates of the finest public schools in the country, plus a college education. Urban youth is hurt worse than suburban youth with this lack of opportunity. This bill only encourages us to

export more of that age group to places that want them to start businesses and pursue their dreams. Connecticut suffers when this happens.

Connecticut must change its practices. The recently formed State Tax Panel has already pointed out that income taxes for the state, and property taxes for municipalities, are over represented parts of our tax system. Pursuing SB 946 prior to the tax commission's report seems to be getting ahead of what could be a good opportunity to adopt a potentially better and certainly more holistically developed plan. Why not wait for the report to make major changes?

The overreach to have the state be able to appropriate property tax dollars when it is the only municipal source of revenue is stunning. Do you redistribute real estate taxes next year? Do you intend to eliminate Town Government and Boards of Education next year because there is nothing left to run our towns with?

More needs to be done to spend smarter as we invest substantial public funds. The CT regional Institute for the 21st Century has done 6 reports about how to reorganize various state programs for long term savings with improved outcomes for the recipients. This body ought to be implementing them all now, so the hard pressed taxpayers recognize the savings sooner and the dependent citizens get better services.

CRCOG has implemented lean back office systems like on line permitting, group buying/bulk purchase, and other newly starting computerization programs scaled across multiple communities with a virtually unlimited ability for us to grow further with minimal cost. Our communities have already changed employee benefits in a fair and equitable fashion to preserve quality benefits at an affordable cost to the taxpayer. We share equipment and expertise and continue to look for ways to do more; and so should the state! Government should manage for only two groups; taxpayers for maximum benefit for their hard earned tax dollars, and disadvantaged recipients to get the best services possible so they can be productive members of society.

Finally, Leaders need to lead. If we want to change Connecticut's direction, let's change the rules for the elected and appointed officials first. Implement a defined contribution retirement plan for yourselves, implement HSA compatible health care as the standard policy, and do not count elected or appointed service to years of service in the civil service portion of our state government for retirement purposes. Remember to manage credit and debt as if it was being passed to your grandchildren, which it is. These changes will prove you are serious about a new day of government for all of our residents. You will be amazed at the cooperation you would get looking for a new way that included everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my remarks today.