



State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition

- > Administrative & Residual Union Local 4200/AFT
 - > AFT Connecticut
 - > American Association of University Professors – Connecticut State University
 - > American Association of University Professors – UCONN
 - > American Federation of State, County, & Municipal Employees - Council 4
 - > Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges/ SEIU Local 1973
 - > Connecticut Association of Prosecutors
 - > Connecticut Employees Union Independent/ SEIU Local 511
 - > Connecticut Federations of School Administrators Local 61
 - > Connecticut Police and Fire Union/IAFF-IUPA
 - > UAW, Region 9A
 - > CSEA SEIU Local 2001
 - > International Brotherhood of Police Officers/SEIU Local 731
 - > New England Healthcare Employees Union, District 1199/SEIU
 - > UCONN Health Center Faculty-AAUP
 - > Judicial Professional Employees Union

October 7, 2020
S. Fae Brown-Brewton
Undersecretary for Labor Relations
By Electronic Mail

Dear Ms. Brown-Brewton:

We are in receipt of your letter of September 29, 2020, and we have followed the recent unfortunate public comments of the administration about this issue. As we expressed after Mr. Walsh’s presentation when we met briefly on March 13, 2020 -- before turning our attention to how we could work together to minimize the impact of the developing pandemic -- we asked the administration to dramatically rethink its approach to this project.

First, it needs to be reframed to be focused on addressing the core needs and values of Connecticut’s people. Decades of downsizing have left critical public safety net needs unmet and our agencies critically understaffed. See [State employee OT is up, but salary costs are lower than a decade ago](#) (noting the 10% cut in executive branch employment under the Malloy Administration alone). The possibility of 8700 executive branch retirements (with many others in the state’s other understaffed branches of government) is something the parties together should be seeking to avoid because of the further devastation it would cause to the people and communities we serve. The suggestion that the further massive loss of knowledge, dedication and experience is “an opportunity” and to publicly connect it to still further downsizing suggests the administration’s gaze is aimed in precisely the wrong direction.

The failure of this vision to rise to the current needs of our state and its people is made still more evident in the letter’s use of the phrase -- again in keeping with recent comments by the administration -- “maintaining service delivery” in light of the recession. If the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant economic crisis have taught us anything, they should have taught us that “maintaining services” is and has been for decades grossly inadequate to addressing the core problems of our state. We are the most segregated state in the nation by race and class. Almost all of our economic growth goes to a small percentage of the 1%, and most of us -- even those currently earning a comfortable living - - are but a few paychecks away from economic ruin.

We have seen in the COVID crisis that we often pay the least to the people we need the most, and that race, national origin, immigrant status, and class, not only leave one with less opportunity to advance, but at more risk of illness and death. So, when we talk about “maintaining services”, we talk about continuing to accept the unacceptable. We are a state where opportunity and safety are predicted most accurately by zip code, where income inequality by class and race gets worse daily, and where we have so far lacked the courage to rethink our budget and our priorities so that we move forward, instead of backwards, in addressing this intolerable truth. We need more services, more focus, and more investment in genuine equal opportunity and democracy. “Maintain” only means to continue to move backwards.

The letter mentions the state's ongoing fiscal struggles, and to the extent that is caused by the pandemic, it is attributable to the refusal of some in Washington to support the Hero's Act, with its provisions to assist state and local government in this time of crisis. We know the Lamont administration does not support that refusal. But the state's fiscal struggles long precede COVID-19. They stem in part from our failure to address income and wealth inequality and to provide genuine economic opportunity and security for the majority of Connecticut's people, because people with no jobs, or low paying jobs, can't pay much in taxes and can't spend to expand the economy. Meanwhile the superrich spend little of what they have, keeping it tied up in stocks and – too often – out of state and offshore investments.

But the state's fiscal issues also stem from its failure to adopt genuine tax reform, its tolerance of a tax system where multi-millionaires and billionaires pay a lower combined state and local tax rate than working people. With genuine progressive taxation, we can begin to invest in ways that go beyond “maintaining services” to genuinely provide growth and opportunity. We can move towards a positive cycle of growth leading to more resources for investment instead of the vicious cycles of downsizing and lost opportunity we have tolerated for so long. In that regard, the RFP at issue here at least gave lip service to this understanding, noting that the responders would be asked to “recommend efficiencies ... in revenue maximization.” It is interesting that this aspect is missing not just in the administration's letter to us, but in all the administration's recent public comments we have been able to find on this matter. It is not by lack of understanding that we continue to tolerate the intolerable – in this case a tax system that only exacerbates the most unequal state in the nation. It is by lack of courage.

Which brings us to the second core failing in the administration's approach; it violates key commitments of the SEBAC agreement. That agreement recognizes certain truths that are essential to turning the state government around. Ironically, Mr. Walsh pasted the relevant sections of the agreement into his presentation on March 13. But in the presentation's proposed actions, and in what has happened since, the administration has ignored it.

That agreement as quoted by Mr. Walsh requires the state to:

- c. Examine and redress barriers to the most efficient use of in-house resources to address agency and cross-agency needs;
- d. Discourage the use of outside contractors and consultants when internal capacity exists or can reasonably be developed;

SEBAC 2011, p 1, as reaffirmed by SEBAC 2017, p. 6. Even with this clear agreement between the state and the Coalition, the administration went to hiring an outside consultant to perform this critical project without any exploration whatsoever of internal capacity. Note that the preference for developing internal capacity in the SEBAC agreement is in the public interest.

Outside consultants, especially for-profit consultants, are often from out of state – like the Boston Consulting Group that got this contract. When they leave, they take their profits with them, and often leave little knowledge behind -- the opposite of the desired effect. It is telling that none of the administration’s public comments about this project have noted the billions the state continues to spend on outside contractors. What would be a real opportunity to serve the people of the state would be if we could carry out the agreement’s capacity to reduce the state’s dependence on outside contractors and consultants and develop and grow the capacity of the state’s employees to serve the interests of its people.

But that is hardly the only violation of the SEBAC Agreement. The letter restates Mr. Walsh’s March 13 presentation of a management dominated and controlled process for transformation. As we noted then, the Agreement calls for a jointly controlled process, recognizing all the science that shows a joint process is by far the most likely way to “harness the creativity and experience of front-line bargaining and non-bargaining unit state employees to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state government.” It does not call for a process effectively controlled by a single administration employee, whatever his title, or by either party.

State workers, like many other working families, have proudly stepped up to serve the people of the state during the current pandemic, and many of them did so at job sites that lacked proper PPE, risking their lives and their families’ lives -- and sadly many got sick, and some paid the ultimate price. State employees struggle daily to mitigate the impacts of decades of austerity, to help provide hope and genuine opportunity to all of Connecticut’s people, and to provide education, healthcare, housing that works for everyone, not just the privileged few, to protect our environment from a global crisis, to stimulate economic development that creates good jobs with good benefits for everyone, to keep all of us safe in our homes and communities. We need state government to be organized and structured in ways that advance that effort instead of hindering it.

We will not allow this process to violate our agreement -- and of course the agreement contains a mechanism to assure that. We will fight to make this process what it ought to be -- a genuine joint effort to convert our state government into a powerful force for progress on the core structural problems that are harming our people. We invite you to rethink the administration’s approach and to join us. We are prepared to meet and discuss how to make this happen as soon as can reasonably be arranged.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan E. Livingston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Daniel E. Livingston,
On Behalf of SEBAC Leadership