

**Support of Senate Bill 155, AN ACT CONCERNING RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE
IMPROVEMENTS.
February 25, 2020**

Sen. Leone, Rep. Lemar, Sen. Martin, Rep. Devlin, honorable members of the Transportation Committee,

Thank you for accepting my statement in favor of Senate Bill 155, AN ACT CONCERNING RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS.

My name is Joyce Barclay, a Board Member of TEAM Inc., a private not-for-profit human services agency dedicated to the economically disadvantaged and vulnerable at-risk people in our region. Codified in law as the State- and Federally-designated antipoverty agency in the Lower Naugatuck Valley region, TEAM's footprint in these communities span basic needs & emergency assistance, case management services, housing and home heating assistance, transportation supports, employment & training, health services, and more. Focused on community coalitions as well as empowering individuals and families toward economic stability, TEAM is a leading catalyst for community level change based on the needs of more than 11,000 residents that turned to TEAM for help, education, and empowerment in the last year alone.

I am writing to support in the strongest terms the proposal to purchase needed equipment and increase trips on Metro North's Waterbury Branch Line. Doing so will not only increase the quality of service and encourage the use of mass transit, it will provide an opportunity to expand much-needed workforce housing near the stations along the line and, in doing so, provide TEAM's clients with access to jobs, training, education, childcare, healthcare and other vital services they are now unable to easily access.

Moreover, increasing regular dependable service so that residents near the stations can use the trains to commute to work has the VERY LIKELY potential to expand state revenues and grow population by giving new residents of Connecticut – moving from NYC and other locations – the ability to live in the Valley and commute to Fairfield and even midtown Manhattan jobs. It would energize the housing market, increase grand lists in our towns and spark business development that would expand state revenues, municipal revenues and, from TEAM'S perspective, the resources to help our clients.

Every hour of every day, we witness the struggles faced by our low- and moderate-income neighbors – helping them requires our compassion and expertise AND the support this General Assembly and Governor and our Congress have generously provided.

But REALLY helping them — in other words providing them with opportunity to support themselves, adequately provide for their families and realize their dreams — requires satisfying their needs for jobs, training, education, healthcare, childcare and an affordable, appropriate home.

The Waterbury Branch Line holds the key to virtually all of that, and NOT just because of the access it can provide.

Reconnecting America has calculated that housing is the largest expense a household faces: 32% on average. The next largest is transportation, at 19%. But a household living within ½ mile of REGULAR, DEPENDABLE, FREQUENT transit service will see its transportation costs drop to 9%. That additional 10 percentage points of discretionary income can buy more healthcare, childcare, clothing and other vital necessities.

This legislature has, in the last few years, agreed to fund vital capital improvements on the Waterbury branch; signals, turnouts and Positive Train Control will now make it possible for more frequent, reliable service. But without additional rolling stock to allow more frequent trains to serve riders in the Valley, that money will have been wasted. I implore you to forego another study – the studies have already been done – and vote to purchase the additional locomotives and passenger cars as soon as possible.

In doing so, you will not only improve the lives and opportunity of tens of thousands of working households in the Valley. You will be attracting new, taxpaying residents to Connecticut, increasing state revenues and sparking fiscal strength and economic development in our municipalities.

In other words, you will be solving, in one stroke, five problems plaguing our state and region. That, to me, would be a very important action for you to take.

Thank you for your attention – please contact me with any questions you may have.

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