

# OFFICE OF THE SELECTMAN



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## **HB 6439, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**

Testimony for Public Hearing  
Appropriations Committee  
February 22, 2021

Dear Senator Osten and Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Tracey Hanson and I am the First Selectman of the Town of Voluntown. I am here in support of Section 11 of SB-873 with revisions, and I am requesting that the Committee approve an increase in PILOT funding.

I have been before this committee multiple times to request an increase in PILOT funding for the Town of Voluntown. Since SB 873 is a bill that is being proposed to change PILOT reimbursement, I am here again to plead that Voluntown's PILOT funding be increased and that Voluntown's unique situation be taken into consideration when PILOT funding is allocated.

Voluntown is a town that is small in population (with just over 2500 inhabitants), yet large in size, covering 39.8 square miles. What is unique about Voluntown is that close to 70% of the land in Voluntown is owned by the State of Connecticut.

Over the years, the State of Connecticut has acquired more Voluntown land, yet our PILOT funding has remained the same, or even decreased. The State of Connecticut is by far the largest property owner in town and not receiving fully funded, or even close to fully funded PILOT, leaves a huge burden on our residents. This burden is increased in the fact that there is little to no room left in town to develop businesses and housing to raise our grand list.

Usually, our population doubles in the summer with the number of people who visit Voluntown to enjoy the outdoor recreation that this state-owned land provides. This summer, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of visitors from all over the state was more than we were capable of managing. There was a huge increase in trespassing on private property, car accidents on town roads, drinking and drug use, and fire and emergency calls.

Our residents over the years have chosen to use their tax dollars to invest in our children's education. Our school is excellent and our high school students have a wide option for school choice. People move to Voluntown because of our school system. However, this has left the municipal government budget underfunded. We have no senior center, and no senior services at all besides Meals on Wheels. We have no public transportation, no town police or resident trooper, and no recreation center. We have no social services. We are currently a Distressed Municipality, and our population is aging. We are in desperate need of a resident trooper, senior services, and social services. We are in need of increasing our funding to the Volunteer Fire Department to incentivize call response. In order to add all of these much needed services, we would have to increase our mill rate significantly.

Please note that unlike the cities that receive PILOT funding, the State-owned property in Voluntown is almost all land, which is assessed at a lesser value than buildings. On top of that, a huge amount of the State-owned land in Voluntown is assessed at PA-490 value which is also considerably less. According to a report from my Tax Assessor, all of the State-owned land PA-490 land in Voluntown is assessed at almost 4 million dollars. The Assessed value of this same land without PA-490 is almost 33 million dollars. That is a HUGE difference! This does not even take into account the rest of the land that the State owns in town that is assessed as recreation or other value.

I am requesting that funding for SB-873 be considered with revisions. I am requesting that all land that is assessed at PA-490 be assessed at full value when determining the PILOT funding for every municipality. I am requesting that all municipalities in which more than 50 percent of the property is state-owned real property be automatically in tier one of the PILOT reimbursement.

Thank you for your time.

Tracey Hanson  
First Selectman  
Town of Voluntown