

Honorable M. Jodi Rell, Governor

State of Connecticut

Re: Letter from Secretary Genario

Dear Governor Rell,

I write on behalf of the 45,000 members of SEBAC's constituent unions to respond to Secretary Genario's letter of March 18, 2010. I write to you, rather than to Secretary Genario, because it is obviously you who made the policy decisions inherent in the letter and the proposals it attaches. Union leaders have asked me to be very clear and direct with you about our response.

We will not provide a point by point reply because it would dignify the disrespect the letter and proposals show to 45,000 public service workers and to all of Connecticut's struggling working families. We will however, point out the highlights:

The factual inaccuracies in the letter are only the smallest part of the disrespect. For instance, the letter suggests that the negotiations which successfully lead to the SEBAC 2009 concessions agreement did not anticipate worsening budgetary conditions, when in fact that possibility was a frequent and explicit part of the negotiations, and the agreement includes provisions explicitly designed to deal with it. You know this, and Bob Genario knows this, and it is unfortunate that you asked him to write a letter that suggests otherwise.

Even the cavalier manner in which you dismiss our suggestions for savings and improvements to state services is but a small part of the problem. We offered in March of 2009 to directly involve frontline workers in the crucial task of streamlining and improving state services to meet the ever increasing public demand during hard times. Your negotiating team then caucused for all of 45 seconds before dismissing those suggestions out of hand. Now a year later, we offer to bring frontline workers directly to the table – people who actually experience daily which programs work, and which don't, and which bureaucratic obstacles stand in the way of the provision of crucial services to Connecticut's people. And once again you dismiss this offer as insignificant.

Even the disrespect for all of working people which is inherent in treating a collective bargaining agreement as meaningless is not the most significant problem although it is significant indeed. What kind of message do you send to 45000 working families who sacrificed substantial wages and benefits to produce an agreement that Bob Genario told us just last month greatly benefited the state when you send a letter suggesting that agreement is neither appreciated nor should it be honored? Apparently that is not an issue of real concern to you, although you'd think it would matter a lot to a governor who understood the value of a real partnership between managers and working people.

No governor, the greatest disrespect you show is to all the people of the State of Connecticut. Those people are hurting, governor, and they need a state government that responds to their needs, that does whatever is necessary to create jobs and rebuild our struggling economy. They need a real jobs programs, a massive program that matches the scale of the terrible problems facing our people and communities. You cannot deliver that program, because of a your relentless refusal to ask the Wall Street bankers and other millionaires -- some of whom caused the very recession from which the rest of us still suffer -- to pay their fair share. And in a cynical effort to distract the public from your constant choice of the 5% who are super rich over the 95% who are suffering, you make proposals to us which you know perfectly well are insulting and completely unacceptable, no doubt just so you can try to scapegoat public service workers for refusing them. Scapegoat the very group that came first to the budgetary table to offer to help, the group that produced more that \$700 million in savings, on a percentage basis 10 times what you've even been will to ask from the richest multi-millionaire. Cynical scapegoating which masquerades for leadership is exactly what the people of Connecticut don't need in the deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression.

We will close by reminding you of what we said in a letter in February of 2009, not long after we began the bargaining which lead to the SEBAC 2009 agreement.

*...We are confident that the members we represent, who have dedicated their careers to public service, want us in their name to offer to be part of the solution to the state's crisis. We are equally confident that they want us to be clear about the nature of that offer — that it be part of a genuine solution, one that protects the public services upon which the people of this state depend, and upon which our economic recovery also relies. Our members want to contribute to a solution that makes things better for everyone, not worse. And as two Nobel Prize winning economists have already told us, a supposed solution premised on reducing public services just when they are needed the most would make things worse for everyone. *** The supposedly easier alternative of cutting public services not only abandons Connecticut's people just when they need services the most - thereby building up more costs that will need to be paid in the future - it makes the economy worse, which will only cause more suffering and future budget crises.*

At your insistence, Governor, the budget ultimately adopted was premised largely on cuts, and in addition to the suffering it has caused Connecticut's people, it has done exactly what we predicted it would. It has cost the state thousands of private sector jobs – best estimates are about 50,000 -- which in turn further depressed the economy, which helped cause the very additional budget problems you had Bob Genario complain about in his letter. We are reminded -- and not pleasantly -- of the famous story of the man convicted of murdering his parents who asks the judge for mercy because he's an orphan.

We will not join you, governor, in leading Connecticut on a mad race to the bottom, a race which benefits only the very privileged few. Instead, we will continue fighting for a Connecticut that works, a Connecticut which provides good jobs with living wages, affordable health care, and a dignified retirement to all of its hard working people. We believe it is possible to win that fight if people of good

will come together – indeed we think history demands that we win that fight so that the Connecticut we leave our children and grandchildren is one of which we can all be proud. We are sorry you have strayed so firmly onto the wrong side of this struggle.