

Misty Maza

Subject: FW: Public Testimony: Opposition to Municipal Employee Residency Requirement

From: Daryl Jones <daryl.h.jones@gmail.com>

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To: Albert Lucas <alucas@newhavenct.gov>; Alex Guzhnay <AGuzhnay@newhavenct.gov>

Subject: Public Testimony: Opposition to Municipal Employee Residency Requirement

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Dear President Walker-Myers and Majority Leader Furlow,

I write to offer my testimony in opposition to municipal employee residency requirements for the City of New Haven, and to urge the Board of Alders to consider the long-term implications such policies carry for our city's ability to attract and retain exceptional public servants.

I understand the intuitive appeal behind residency requirements. The premise — that employees who live in the communities they serve will be more invested in their work and perform at a higher level — is not without merit. A city employee who walks the same streets, sends children to the same schools, and frequents the same businesses as the residents they serve may indeed feel a deeper connection to their work. I respect that reasoning.

However, I believe the evidence and experience of peer cities points clearly in a different direction.

New Haven is engaged in ongoing and robust conversations about how to grow our city, strengthen our tax base, and deliver high-quality municipal services. Residency requirements work against each of those goals by artificially narrowing the pool of candidates willing and able to serve. The reality is that talented professionals — whether in public works, finance, public safety, education, or social services — have choices about where they work. When New Haven requires residency as a condition of employment, we are not competing against cities that do the same; we are competing against cities that do not. And we are losing candidates to them.

The soul of public service is a commitment to improving the lives of others. That commitment is not geography. It is character, competence, and dedication. Many of our finest public servants — teachers, administrators, social workers — live outside the city limits precisely because housing costs, family circumstances, or personal preference have led them elsewhere. To suggest that where someone sleeps diminishes the quality of the service they provide is, I would argue, an unfair and unsubstantiated assumption.

Removing or relaxing the residency requirement would signal to the regional and national talent market that New Haven is serious about competing for the best. It would expand our applicant pool, reduce

time-to-hire, and allow department heads to make decisions based on qualifications rather than zip codes. The cities that have moved away from rigid residency mandates have largely found that service quality is maintained or improved — because they were able to hire better.

I am deeply proud of this city and confident in its future. I ask that the Board of Alders take the long view: invest in the quality of our workforce by opening the door wider, and trust that great people — wherever they live — can and do serve New Haven with excellence.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Daryl H. Jones
Resident of City of New Haven
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