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April 7, 2016

Dear Members of the Assembly Judiciary Committee:

RE: Support of "Compromise" Atlantic City Economic Recovery Act (A-3614)

Thank you Chairman for the opportunity to speak with you this morning on one of the most important issues effecting not only Atlantic City and the Southern New Jersey region, but the basic democratic rights of workers and residents. We thank Speaker Prieto for his leadership on this bill and we are here today to ask you and your colleagues to support a recovery plan for Atlantic City that is a win-win for the residents of the city, the taxpayers of the state and the workers employed by the City.

The bill before you today forces hard choices on the part of all parties involved. Simply stated - it mandates that Atlantic City clean up its fiscal house or face severe consequences. The bill establishes benchmarks to force progress on a variety of budgetary matters, and then over the course of 12-24 months, measures that progress. If not in compliance, then privatization is placed on the table, and the bill allows for the modification or termination of collective bargaining agreements.

This bill makes progress because it is now Atlantic City specific, and these "takeover" powers cannot be implemented in other cities across our state. It also has a brief grace period for the PILOT provisions and other revenue sources to take effect throwing a lifeline to the struggling city. It supports internationally recognized human rights in the workplace and core principles of democratic governance, including the right to organize and the right to collective bargaining. These principles are crucial to the economic success of our workers and their communities.

The bill is not perfect, far from it, but in any compromise, all sides must make sacrifices.

Attached is the letter sent to all Members of the General Assembly yesterday by the New Jersey State AFL-CIO. That letter summarizes the enormous amount of givebacks various public sector unions have already made in order to do their part in rescuing Atlantic City.

In closing, let's save Atlantic City the responsible way, by giving local and state elected officials, along with residents and workers of the city the ability to be masters of their destiny. Allow them to work together to meet these benchmarks, or face the severe consequences associated with missing them. Let's be partners in the future of this great city.

Sincerely,

Charles Wowkanech
President

Laurel Brennan
Secretary-Treasurer

CW:LB:jd
OPEIU:153
Attachment (1)

