

The United States House of Representatives
Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing on Tax Reform and Charitable Contributions

Testimony of Kimberly Morgan, Chief Executive Officer of
United Way of Western Connecticut, Danbury CT

February 14, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Kim Morgan. I am Chief Executive Officer of the United Way of Western Connecticut, which provides services to 15 communities in 2 counties, including the Town of Newton CT, which endured a grave tragedy on December 14, 2012.

I have just a few thoughts that I would like to share with the committee today.

- First, I'd like to acknowledge the tremendous outpouring of support that our community has received-- and continues to receive -- from across the country and all over the world in response to this tragic event. The remarkably generous response-- in all of its forms—is the foundation upon which the Newtown community has begun the process of healing.
- Second, it is important that people understand the depth and duration of the recovery challenge that we face. It will take many, many years; many millions of dollars; decades of mental health services; and an unending reserve of human compassion and support for this community to cope with the injury it has suffered.

- Third, it is important for this committee to recognize the important role that the charitable tax deduction can play in helping a community to respond to such a severe circumstance. While taking nothing away from the pure compassion that has motivated the generous response, we must acknowledge that many of the more substantial donations may have been less substantial except for the existence of the charitable tax deduction. I know this to be true from conversations that I personally have had with donors.
- Finally, I want to emphasize that -- even prior to the tragic events of December 14-- it was the existence of the charitable tax deduction which-- in part-- enabled the UWWC to be in position to provide immediate resources, services and structure to the Newtown community. I am convinced that we would not have been nearly as able to respond, nor would our social service system, had our regular donors not been able to take advantage of the charitable tax credit deduction.
- United Way of Western Connecticut received help from United Ways across the country and across the state after the Newtown tragedy. They were able to do this because United Ways have worked to engage communities for decades in working together and raising the resources necessary to tackle tough community challenges. People know they can rely on United Way to help garner the resources, to use them wisely and responsibly, and to coordinate offers of volunteer assistance to best assist the community. United Ways in Connecticut also contribute to our statewide United Way 2-1-1 service, which helped in the response to the Newtown tragedy, taking calls and offers of assistance and providing crisis intervention and trauma resources for people looking for help dealing with their grief and explaining the inexplicable to their children. This community generosity is something we rely on at United Way and in

turn the charitable deduction certainly helps to sustain and grow that generosity.

- United Way of Western Connecticut opposes any new limitations to the charitable deduction for any donor. Given the inevitable government cuts to critical education and human service programs, Congress should be looking for ways to expand incentives for private charitable giving. I thank the committee for this opportunity and would urge the members to consider these points during your deliberations on this issue.