

**AN ACT CONCERNING ERGONOMICS AND WORKPLACE SAFETY.  
HB 5740**

I'm here in support of HB 5740. My name is Paul Dickes. I'm the chief union safety representative at Pratt & Whitney for Local Lodge 700. I represent the bargaining unit members at the Pratt & Whitney Middletown Plant on safety issues.

Ergonomics standard would be very beneficial for all employers around the state. We have very active ergonomics programs at Pratt & Whitney that have been very successful. Our committees are comprised of both hourly and salary; we measure our number of ergonomic injuries and how many injuries we have and what types. Our committees are trained to investigate and implement ergonomic fixes.

We've actually had the insurance company come in, (AIG) to review our ergonomics program and they have verified that an ergonomics program is effective and reduces injuries. We actually send our union safety reps and some of our safety committee's members to the health and safety conference around the country to find ways of supporting the ergonomics effort at Pratt & Whitney. We have also had an International Association of Machinists come in to give training to the joint teams, which is up to 32 hours long.

Now Pratt & Whitney employees develop the training provided for the team members. This training was developed jointly and consists of hourly and salary working together to reduce the ergonomic injuries at Pratt & Whitney. Pratt & Whitney has also purchased software and help from consultants, along with hiring ergonomic engineers to facilitate ergonomic fixes.

Pratt & Whitney has spent a great deal of money and effort to reduce ergonomic injuries to give the employees a better quality of life while they are at work and while they are home and in their retirement years. Having a committee will reduce injuries and in most cases can be done very cost effectively. Just by moving the workstations position so that the person is not working in an awkward position.

Our injury rate for ergonomic injuries is over 60% of the injury types in Middletown. We won an award from the Workers' Compensation Commission for the reduction of injuries and this is why I support the bill because it has lowered Pratt & Whitney's cost of workers' compensation and has given the employees a significant help in eliminating pain and suffering.

Think of it this way. During World War II aircraft manufactures hired persons small in stature to work on the tail landing gear since taller people couldn't fit in the space. These aircraft manufactures were doing ergonomics but for different reasons. We need to make ergonomics and health and safety a value and create a culture to prevent work-connected injuries. (*Ergonomics is fitting the work to the worker not the worker to the work*).

This can be done quite cheaply and effectively or can be done with great expense. This depends on how much effort is put into the program and the budgeting for the fixes. The

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cost of ergonomic injuries is quite high about (i.e. \$30,000 for carpal tunnel). What would it cost to readjust the workstation to an orientation that is more ergonomic friendly couple hundred dollars? Or give the person a tool that has less vibration.

There are numerous training seminars offered across the nation and several in the state of CT. CBIA has even offered training to companies at very little cost to employers along with the University of Connecticut, OSHA (state and federal) and ConnectiCosh can give the training to companies and it's employees with low cost and effective training.

A two hour seminar can get you going to help you get some ideas and get some knowledge on how to eliminate ergonomic injuries. It does not have to be very expensive. You can do it by simply at your work station sitting, or at your desk, the things that you use most frequently you want to put closer to you. The things you use less frequently you have farther away. Even simple things like this, by a little bit of rearranging your work area can keep you from twisting, turning and putting your body in bad posture and can reduce ergonomic injuries.

I also am affected by carpal tunnel. I wake up every night with numbness in both hands, depending on how I sleep. I cannot drive long distances without my hands going numb. Whenever I tried to pick up my grandson, my niece, my nephew, to hold them for any time, my hands go numb. These ergonomic injuries affected my quality of life when my grandchildren and nieces and nephews were growing up. I probably would not have had these injuries if there was ergonomics standard or committees in place when I was working in the facility and that's why I'm asking for your support on HB.

Thank you.

Respectively submitted



Paul M Dickes Jr.

Chief Union Safety Representative Local Lodge 700

e-mail's: Union Hall: [eh&s@iam700.org](mailto:eh&s@iam700.org) home: [safety700@sbcglobal.net](mailto:safety700@sbcglobal.net)

Contact Numbers Union Hall: 860-345-2098, Cell: work: 860-883-1915 personal: 860-614-0825