

TO THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

RE: HOUSE BILL 5217

TESTIMONY OF MAGISTRATE IRVING B. SHURBERG

Good Afternoon Members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Irving B. Shurberg and I am here to speak in favor of H.B. 5217, an Act Concerning Compensation for Small Claims & Motor Vehicle Magistrates.

As a Small Claims and Motor Vehicle Magistrate for over 7 years, and an attorney for more than 50 years, I am aware of the very important function served by these Magistrates. The Small Claims Magistrate is the Judicial Authority in the 22 Small Claims courts in the State of Connecticut. We review every claim filed, hear contested cases, hear and decide all motions and enter every judgment.

During the fiscal year ended June 30, 2005, 72,249 cases were filed in the Small Claims Courts, and we disposed of 76,466 cases. We relieve the Superior Court judges from hearing and reviewing all these cases, but our compensation is woefully inadequate. The Magistrates have not received an increase in compensation for more than 20 years. The \$150.00 per day we now receive, in terms of 1985 dollars, adjusted for inflation, is today worth only \$25.00.

The great majority of our Magistrates are full time practitioners and therefore serve at a considerable sacrifice. Magistrates spend at least 5 hours when serving as a Magistrate which equates to about \$30.00 per hour. It must be pointed out that we receive no other benefits or compensation and bear our own expense for transportation. I am aware that some magistrates travel thousands of miles to and from court. The last full year, I traveled 1,800.00 miles. If a Magistrate were to work every day for 50 weeks of a year, our annual pay would only be \$37,500.00.

In order to retain competent experienced Magistrates I urge you to adopt this bill. Thank you for your time.