

Connecticut General Assembly

S.B. No. 559 : An Act Concerning Caddies

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Madam Chairman, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Don Logan, of Trumbull, Connecticut, and I am speaking here today in support of SB No.559, "An Act Concerning Caddies".

I appear here today in place of my son, Sean Logan, a freshman at Trumbull High School -- who is currently taking his CAP tests and so could not be here. This bill has been raised, in part, in response to recent efforts by my son to obtain local employment -- and the resulting information we have found with regard to inconsistencies in the current law as written, as well as some disturbing attitudes we have encountered when trying to address these inconsistencies.

Last year, Sean, who turned 14 last September, took up the electric guitar and, after showing strong talent and interest, decided he wanted to upgrade his equipment --a fairly expensive proposition. However, unlike most of his contemporaries, he did not expect his parents to pay for this equipment (...and a good thing, too!).

Instead, he asked me to about ways to earn money for himself. Knowing that I had worked as a caddy at a golf course on Long Island when I was his age, he asked me if this was a path he could pursue. Given his enterprising and, frankly, refreshingly different focus from what I've seen in most kids his age, I was all too happy to support and encourage this initiative.

After researching the local Trumbull area, we were able to make contact with the golf professional at the Patterson Club in Fairfield, CT. The Patterson Club was founded in 1929 by local General Electric executives as a social club, and then expanded to a golf facility in 1946. Today, it is a member-owned private club with over 500 member families. We were very excited about the possibility that Sean might be able to work at such a prestigious facility.

Sean met with the club professional, Chris Kenney, in September of last year, to discuss the possibility of his working as a caddy. Mr. Kenney was apparently impressed enough with Sean that he offered him a salaried position working around the pro-shop -- carrying bags, running errands, cleaning clubs... in essence, doing caddy-level work, but paid by the club... not by the golfers. It was an incredible opportunity -- paying a good wage (\$7.50 per hour), along with tips, while offering Sean the ability to establish a presence

there that could continue through his high school years, and beyond. Sean was excited beyond description.

The Club provided Sean with an offer letter, and instructed him to get working papers through his school, so he could start work right away. And, this is where things got interesting – and very frustrating.

At his school, Sean was told that he needed to be 16-years-old in order to obtain working papers. We researched this on the Internet, and saw that the CT Department of Labor clearly listed a number of locations/situations where 14- and 15-year olds could work – including golf caddies... and so Sean went back to his school with this information.

He was then told that, while it was true that the situations listed on the CT DOL site were valid for his age, there was still a minimum limit of 16-years of age for the issuance of working papers. He was advised to go back to the golf club with this information, and see if they would waive the request for working papers. We did so, and were told by the Patterson Club that they wanted to pay Sean ‘on the books’ – with all requisite taxes and withholdings – and so they did prefer proper documentation.

I then called the Department of Labor to further investigate this situation. I was given the same statutory information --- yes, 14/15-year-olds could work in certain positions but, no, working papers could not be issued. During each discussions -- I made several calls, moving up to more senior DOL personnel each time-- I pointed out that their web site listed locations such as banks, hospitals and insurance companies – noting that establishments such as these must surely need proper documentation in order to pay wages, and account for taxes. I was told – repeatedly, but always ‘off the record’ – that such employment is typically done ‘off the books’.

At last I spoke to a fairly senior-level official at the DOL, again making the above points – this time pressing very hard on the clear gap in the regulations – where a 14/15-year-old could work in certain establishments, but could not get working papers. Rather than address this issue, I was told that, since the golf course in question was a private club, not a municipal course as stated in the regulations, my working papers question was moot... as, in any event, my son could not work there until he was 16.

I tried to continue the discussion – asking, hypothetically, if my son had been offered a position in a bank or an insurance company, where he could work, how would he get the working papers to do so. I was told by this official that he did not want to get into a theoretical conversation – that if I wanted to pursue this discussion further, then I needed to get the law changed to allow 14-year-olds to work at a private course, as well as a municipal one.

...And that, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, is why I am here before you today – to get this specific requirement changed regarding 14/15-year-old employment options ... and to hopefully address the ability to obtain necessary working paper documentation to allow employers to support proper employment in such cases.

My son has shown initiative, and a willingness to take on his own responsibilities, at a level all too rare in someone of his age today. He has received an offer from a reputable establishment -- one that clearly wants to live up to its obligations as an employer, and maintain my son as a properly documented employee. This is a tremendous opportunity for Sean -- one that will help him not only financially, but also in life experience and valuable future relationships... and he has my full support and endorsement to pursue this situation.

And, yet, at each level of authority we have encountered, we have experienced avoidance of the key issues, a lack of credible response in explaining the gap in the regulations -- and, worse, an ever-present indication that the most common resolution to address this gap is to simply 'work off the books'... as that's what 'everybody' usually does (!!).

After all the effort my son has gone to in order to come up with an enterprising and proactive path to pursue his musical interests -- and try to pay for this on his own -- I most certainly do not want to send him a message that says, "...Sorry, son, but there's a hole in the current regulations -- and the only way to address this hole is to circumvent the rules..."

...and, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, I am sure that this is not the message you want me to take back to him today.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to support passage of this bill -- and to consider expansion of the bill to also close the gap caused by the current minimum 16-year-old age requirement for issuance of working papers... therefore enabling 14/15-year olds who want to engage in approved locations/situations, to be able to obtain working papers in order to work on a properly documented basis.

I thank you for your time and consideration -- and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.