

Council 4 AFSCME Testimony for HB 5798; Labor Committee; March 14, 2006

My name is Lisa Fontano. I am speaking for Council 4 AFSCME in favor of House Bill 5798, An Act Concerning Disability Retirement for Correction Officers. I also serve as a state correction officer at Cheshire Correctional Institute.

A few years ago the State of Connecticut decided to elevate any state police officer who is made permanently disabled through a line of duty injury to the top of their class. This was a humane and decent decision. Council 4 asks you to extend this same benefit to state correction officers. This makes state policy consistent.

My husband, Domenic, also a correction officer was severely injured while saving an inmate from assault by other inmates. His injury rendered him permanently disabled. Domenic had excellent service ratings and was commended for his performance. He expected to serve his whole career as a correction officer and proudly so. Obviously, those plans were changed.

Last year this committee and General Assembly passed a bill, as I understand it, with Domenic's case in mind along with a few others. Luckily, there are very few officers whose line of duty injuries have been so severe that they would qualify. We were surprised to find out that the Office of Policy Management declined one of these cases. I was told that this was because a starting date had not been included in last year's bill. This bill remedies that.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.