

*Good afternoon members of the Labor Public Employees
Committee*

My name is Jennifer Lee. I am an Investigator III with the Public Defender's Office in the Hartford Judicial District. I have been an Investigator with the Division since January of 1994. I have worked in Hartford for all of my years. I have spent 6 years in Hartford Juvenile Court and have been with the JD since for the last 7 years. I am currently the supervisory Investigator for the Hartford Judicial District. While I would not want to work in any other city, I am also very aware of the dangers that my job subjects me to. Because I work in the Judicial District of Hartford, I typically deal with the more serious crimes that occur. I investigate murders, death penalty cases, sexual assaults and robberies. On a daily basis, I come into contact with the defendants who have been charged with these crimes. Most are incarcerated. I interview both defendants and witnesses at the various prisons throughout the state. I go to crime scenes-most being in the north end of Hartford. I am not allowed to carry a weapon and on occasion I go to these areas alone or with just one fellow investigator. I am required to have my own private car at my disposal for Investigations such as these. On a few occasions, my private vehicle has been broken into and items have been stolen.

I just briefly wanted to tell you of a few instances where I believe I have been at risk during the course of my job as an Investigator with the Public Defender's Office. I was on a routine investigation attempting to find and interview a witness in the north end of Hartford. I was accompanied by a male social worker from my office. On this occasion, we encountered an individual who was acting quite suspect. He had a long coat on, started following us, and a number of times patted something that was in his coat pocket. Both of us were aware that this man started to follow us. We were behind a building in a housing project and did not see anyone else around. I believe that this man had a weapon and was

planning to rob us. As he approached us, a person walked out from behind the building and the man just continued to walk by us. Both myself and the social worker went straight to our car and went back to the office. Had it not been for this other individual who walked out at the right time, I believe we would have been robbed.

Another occasion that I now laugh about but could have been a dangerous situation was a time that I was chased by a large German shepherd through a housing project. I was again with this same social worker and the witness we needed to interview was at an apartment with a large German shepherd sitting out in front of the door. This witness had no phone so we had no choice but to attempt to contact this witness in person. As we approached the entrance to the apartment, this dog came after us down the stairs, out the building, and chased us through the housing project. I can now laugh about it but had this dog caught us, we could have been severely injured.

While working in the Hartford juvenile office, I would often interact with the juveniles held in the Hartford detention facility. After spending time in the facility, I would often be made aware of a tuberculosis outbreak or scabies outbreak. I have been tested quite a few times for TB, I have gotten the hepatitis vaccination, and I probably come into contact daily with HIV+ clients or witnesses, not to mention IV drugs users.

As investigators for the defense, we never know what type of situations we could encounter. Because most of the contact we have is with indigent clients and families, we often have to locate these people at their homes as they don't have phones or stable addresses. Going out to a location unannounced benefits us in the sense that we can find people, but it also exposes us to situations that are unexpected such as drug use or witnesses

who are upset. Heroin-Velez. There is a stigma attached to the Public Defender's Office. We are often accused of working for the State and not doing enough for our clients. This can subject us to angry family members, witnesses, and defendants. You just never know what could occur.

I would ask you to please include the Investigators for the Public Defender's under the hazardous duty statute. This would not only benefit me and the current investigators, but also future investigators who will be exposed to many of these same situations. Thank you for your time.