



# CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

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## Testimony before the Labor and Public Employees committee

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the Labor and Public employees committee. My name is Lori Pelletier and I am the Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. I am here on behalf of the 211,000 union men and women from all across this great state to testify on the following raised bills:

We support S.B. No. 1290 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ACCOUNTABILITY IN CONTRACTING WITH STATE AGENCIES. This is about transparency. If tax dollars are being spent then the public should have access to the information.

We support S.B. No. 1294 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING FAIR WAGES FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROVIDERS CONTRACTING WITH THE STATE. This legislation would support the workers who provide a valuable service to our state. By creating a "wage floor" Human service workers wouldn't be faced with diminished wages each time their contract was ending. This has been utilized in other areas for the state it's time we extend these simple protection to these workers.

We support H.B. No. 7035 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ERGONOMICS AND WORKPLACE SAFETY. Large employers are required to have health & safety teams in the workplace. This bill simply adds ergonomics into their scope so that they can work to prevent injuries and thereby save money. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) ergonomic injuries are the fastest growing category of injuries in the United States today. They are now the leading cause of Workers' Compensation claims, and even unreported cases are accompanied by pain, loss of function, and the potential for permanent disability. Allowing these committees to consider ergonomics is good for the worker and for the employer.

We support H.B. No. 7036 (RAISED) AN ACT ELIMINATING THE STANDARD WAGE CONTRACT THRESHOLD. The current law allows companies to play games with the threshold of \$49,900.00, and it is the worker who gets hurt by this game. The reason behind this law is so workers aren't hurt every time a new contract is negotiated with the state for services. But business has found a loophole in the law and this proposed legislation will close it.

We support H.B. No. 7264 (RAISED) AN ACT GRANTING GRADUATE ASSISTANTS AT STATE UNIVERSITIES THE RIGHT TO BARGAIN COLLECTIVELY. Currently in the Connecticut university system there are 5500 graduate and teaching assistants. More and more these "students" are carrying more and more responsibility. In their "employment handbook" they are instructed that "even in the case of an exam, the employee must show up for scheduled work hours or face termination." If these "students" are being considered "employees" then they should have the right to collectively bargain. Many states across the nation have already recognized these rights, including Massachusetts and California.

I appreciate the Committee hearing my testimony today and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

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