

Good morning Chairwoman Slossberg, Chairman Caruso and Distinguished Members of the Government Administration and Elections.

My name is Steven Rief, and I am President of the Connecticut State Police Union.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today.

I am here to speak in SUPPORT of:

PROPOSED BILL NO. 61

AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTION FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

I would like to start my testimony by stating that I am currently a state employee, and work as a State Trooper with the Connecticut State Police. I have served the state in this capacity for nearly 19 years. The Department of Public Safety-Division of State Police is currently in a state of crisis. Since 2005 there have been a steady stream of State Troopers, my coworkers, who have gone to the Attorney General's Office to report on malfeasance, harassment, intimidation and cronyism within the ranks of the State Police. This resulted in, along with independent demands by the Connecticut State Police Union, the New York State Police and Connecticut Attorney General's Office conducting a 13 month investigation into the internal affairs division of the Connecticut State Police. These whistleblowers responded to the moral and ethical obligation to report to Attorney General Investigators the abuses of authority within the department, while also seeking protection for the information they conveyed.

The results of the joint New York State Police and Attorney General's Investigation, released in December 2006, outlined a number of occurrences of mismanagement, favoritism, and failure of command within the Connecticut State Police. Harassment and intimidation by some of our personnel still continues today. Sadly, some of our whistleblowers have become targets of harassment and intimidation because of their whistleblower status. In a prominent case, this led to a follow up report issued by the Attorney General Richard Blumenthal's Office in May 2007 substantiating retaliation of a department whistleblower. The State of Connecticut has the obligation and responsibility to protect its whistleblowers. It has become abundantly clear that current state statutes do not provide for such protection. It is vital that reform of the whistleblower statutes occur to allow for the Attorney General to intervene when whistleblowers have been retaliated against.

I would like to close by thanking this committee for your attention to this important issue and I would be happy to provide you with any further information.

CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION
Steven Rief, President

February 25, 2008