



March 12, 2008

GENERAL ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Senator Gayle Slossberg, Co-Chair
Representative Christopher Caruso, Co-Chair
Room 2200, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: **Public Hearing on SB 673: "AN ACT CONCERNING IMPROVED TELECOMMUTING PROGRAMS FOR THE STATE'S WORKFORCE"**

Senator Slossberg and Representative Caruso:

My name is Stephen Anderson, and I am a Supervising Air Pollution Control Engineer for the State's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), where I have worked for the last 20 years. I live in Killingworth and commute to work each day, spending about 2 hours in my car and driving about 80 miles per day in my commute to Hartford.

I am also a union steward in CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 and am joining fellow members testifying in **favor of Senate Bill 673, "An Act Concerning Improved Telecommuting Programs for the State's Workforce."**

As others have already testified, while the State of Connecticut currently has a telecommuting policy for its employees, only a small fraction of our nearly 50,000 State employees have been allowed to participate in it. This needs to change.

The benefits of telecommuting are unmistakable. Telecommuting protects air quality, reduces energy usage and traffic congestion, and provides increased flexibility for employees when needed. While the State of Connecticut has not reacted to the changes in technology and our environment which provide both a means and a need for telecommuting, other public service agencies have. One of those is the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

EPA has gone to great lengths to provide telecommuting options. EPA has allowed and encouraged their employees to participate in telecommuting programs for more than 10 years.

EPA has detailed agreements in place, available on their web site, applicable to both union and non-union employees. The program is called "Flexiplace." Among other reasons for telecommuting, EPA believes these programs respond to sociological and environmental issues and that they result in a reduction in employee turnover and absenteeism.

Basically, EPA's program allows for telecommuting up to two days per week, subject to Supervisory approval. EPA restricts their program to staff employed by

Michael J. O'Brien
President

Patrice Peterson
Secretary/Treasurer

Robert D. Rinker
Executive Director

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
CLC, CTW

CONNECTICUT STATE
EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
760 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106-1206
860.951.6614
Toll Free 1.800.894.9479
FL Toll Free 1.800.437.5630
Fax 860.951.3526



the agency more than a year, and those that have jobs with “portable work” (i.e., work suitable to telecommuting).

According to the General Services Administration’s (GSA) “teleworking” website, about 25% of EPA’s workforce participates in the program. There are many other federal agencies also utilizing these options. The same can be done here in Connecticut, using the federal government’s model.

I also see benefits to workers’ families by implementing flexiplace programs such as those being discussed today. First, there is childcare. Simply having a parent closer to home and available should school age children need them would be beneficial to families. Secondly, these programs can provide for a reduction in medical leave from work. As a union steward I frequently see members having to rely on sick leave and the Family and Medical Leave Act to cover absences due to various illnesses. Many of them have illnesses that may prevent them from driving to work but might not prevent them from working at or closer to their home. Those workers could have requested a work at home option if one was available to them.

Telecommuting is good for our environment, workers and their families, and for many of our resource-starved state agencies looking for ways to gain productive work hours. In addition to my comments today, I will also be providing the Committee with the documents from GSA and EPA that support my testimony. Those will be provided at a later date.

I urge you to support this bill, and thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and knowledge on this subject with your committee.

Stephen Anderson

Supervising Air Pollution Control Engineer, CT Department of Environmental Protection
Steward, P-4 Council, CSEAVSEIU Local 2001

cc: Members, Connecticut General Assembly GAE Committee