

Testimony of Joanna James
Before the GA&E Committee
Re: SB 335 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF
WHISTLEBLOWERS.

Members of the Committee, my name is Joanna James and I am a Staff Rep for CSEA SEIU 2001 and I represent state school teachers working for the State of Connecticut.

Retaliation against state employees is unfortunately not unheard of. Attached is a letter from a group of state employees who fear retaliation from their supervisor, so were unable to attend your committee hearing in person out of concern for their continued employment. Passing bills like 335 would go a long way toward protecting those employees from unwarranted persecution from their bosses. I urge you to pass whistle blower protection legislation like 335. Thank you.

February 21, 2008

Dear Connecticut General Assembly Members,

We are a group of State of Connecticut Teachers who have witnessed, reported on and have been retaliated against by a Connecticut State Manager. We fully support this new legislation that will provide additional protections for Connecticut State Employees. This is long over due.

Our problematic situation has been going on for over 10 plus years and has directly affected over 18 employees. Some of the behaviors reported about this individual include bullying behaviors such as staring, stalking, glaring, jabbing a finger and close body proximity. Other destructive behaviors involved creating false counseling documents on individuals, forgery of signatures, writing felonious evaluations, making personal threats in one-on-one situations, and stealing state time. This individual creates hostile work environments wherever he resides. His abuse of state time, resources and money is unconscionable, yet he continues to be employed by the State. He presently sits in an office with no responsibilities making over \$100,000 dollars per year while his colleagues pick up the pieces he leaves behind.

Although he should be responsible for his own behaviors, those placed in charge of overseeing him have done nothing to stop it. Their solutions seem to be to transfer him to other facilities. In their heads they seem to think that this wipes the slate clean for him, a new beginning. However, once the behaviors surface again, they claim that the other locations were a different situation or happened too long ago to be related.

There are a number of problems with our situation that I hope this new legislation/statutes would address.

1. Managers should be held to higher standards and expectations. Have them sign a legally binding contract.

2. Outside agencies should conduct investigations of department issues, as the in-house investigations are being watered down and used to protect the department not the individual

- 3. Managers should not be allowed to pass on blame to their department. Hold them personally responsible.**
- 4. Set a limit to the number of personnel mistakes a manager can make before being stripped of his power**
- 5. Make it so that managers can be personally sued for abusing their authority.**
- 6. Include "bullying" language as well as nonverbal aggressive behaviors/tactics such as glaring, staring, stalking, and violations of personal space**
- 7. Modify the State of Connecticut "Work Place Violence Policy" to include the language of "bullying tactics".**

These situations will continue to persist until something is done about it. Obviously, no amount of reporting in our situation has been enough. He continues to maintain his job because he is holding the state hostage with a bogus lawsuit. We support this "Bill" because it will give other State Employees the courage to report such behaviors as described above with out the fear of retaliation.