



## International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO, CLC

CONNECTICUT STATE FIREFIGHTERS  
IAFF LOCAL S-15  
PROTECTIVE SERVICES EMPLOYEES COALITION  
705 North Mountain Road  
Newington, CT 06111  
Tel. (860) 953-2626  
Fax (860) 953-1978  
[www.protectiveservices.org](http://www.protectiveservices.org)

Thank you for taking the time to read this, my name is Christy Delvey. I have been a Firefighter/Paramedic for 18 years. A week before Christmas in 2000 I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C. Despite this devastating news I chose to fight the disease and stigmatism that come with it. I don't fit the profile of the three big source groups for infection. I'm not an IV drug user, don't have HIV and have never been in prison. But I have treated people from these high-risk source groups my entire career. One thing that has never effected my treatment decisions is what I am going to catch from my patient if I do this life saving procedure. I do what I'm trained to do and accept that even if I follow all the rules for protecting myself there is still a chance I may be exposed to something. We have all learned from recent events that you may have been doing it right but there is always a chance of something out of the ordinary happening. We cannot plan for every possible scenario, but we try to do our best.

Most of us in public safety think that something like this will never happen, I was one of them. Since then I have spent countless hours learning about this disease to better understand it and to educate my family, friends and coworkers so this doesn't happen to them. I will gain nothing from this bill because I have already been diagnosed, I'm here because I want to help my brothers and sisters in public safety that may be exposed to hepatitis, meningitis and tuberculosis and pray that they don't have to wage the fight against the disease and one to receive the benefits they deserve.

I would like to give you some background on Hepatitis C. You are four times more likely to get it than HIV (AIDS). Approximately four million Americans are infected; many don't even know it because only 25 to 30 percent even have symptoms. Most people who are infected with the hepatitis C do not have symptoms and are leading normal lives. If symptoms are present, they may be very mild and flu-like – nausea, fatigue, loss of appetite, fever, headaches, and abdominal pain. More people are expected to die from hepatitis C than AIDS in the next several years. You may be asking yourself, how is this possible? Hepatitis C is called the silent killer; you can't see, smell it or feel it. Most people don't know they have it until it has caused irreversible damage to the liver. About one in ten people infected with hepatitis C have no identifiable exposure to the disease. Studies are finding that infection rates are higher in the public safety community.

The medications used to treat Hepatitis C can give you symptoms worse than the disease itself. If you have ever had a bad case of the flu, triple the way you felt and that is what the medications do to you. Imagine having to give yourself injections every day for 48



## International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO, CLC

---

CONNECTICUT STATE FIREFIGHTERS  
IAFF LOCAL 8-15  
PROTECTIVE SERVICES EMPLOYEES COALITION  
705 North Mountain Road  
Newington, CT 06111  
Tel. (860) 953-2626  
Fax (860) 953-1978  
[www.protectiveservices.org](http://www.protectiveservices.org)

weeks. After all of this, it may not even put the disease in remission. Notice how I said remission not cure, that's because there is no vaccination or cure at this time. I went through a year of treatment and so far I have been part of a very small percentage of Hepatitis C infected people that the treatment has worked on. But I will never be cured and the virus may come back at any time.

I would like to share some of my experiences with trying to get my illness covered as a line of duty exposure. Because I do not know when or where I was exposed, my claim has been denied. During my research, I learned of things that are considered exposures that I had never been taught in any blood borne pathogen class. Thinking back to medical calls I had done, I probably did have some exposures that I never even considered as exposures. I was even told by someone who handles workers compensation for my state agency that the reason my claim was being denied was because of how much it was going to cost to treat me. Never did this person mention that it was because they didn't think it happened on the job. It hurts me to think that I am just considered as a line item on a budget. I have given up on fighting for my workers compensation benefits, because I have been unable to tie my claim to an event and date when I was exposed.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported me during this and the committee for taking the time to read this. I urge all of you to consider this bill, as it will help protect all of the public safety personnel that selfishly protect and serve the citizens of the State of Connecticut. Please support H.B. 6194. Thank you for your time.