



CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

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Testimony of Lori Pelletier, Secretary-Treasurer Connecticut AFL-CIO

Before the Public Safety Committee

March 3, 2009

Good morning distinguished co-chairs and members of the Public Safety Committee my name is Lori Pelletier and I serve as Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, which represents 220,000 workers from each and every city and town in our State.

I am here to testify in support of S.B. No. 1010 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EXPOSURE TO INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS.

Because of privacy laws, it is difficult if not impossible for state and local police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians to be informed that they have been exposed to a communicable disease. This legislation would require hospitals to notify emergency service organizations when a patient who had been transported by that organization, and who is then diagnosed with an infectious disease. It also allows for information to be shared with the injured worker in the case that a hospital tests the patient and determines that the patient has an infectious diseases. It further clarifies that when these public servants contract communicable diseases, such as hepatitis, meningococcal meningitis or tuberculosis, it is presumed they were exposed to these diseases in the course of their work as emergency responders.

By the nature of their jobs, state and local police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians must put victims' safety and health before their own. Every one of these "heroes" respond to emergency incidents where blood and other bodily fluids are present and uncontrolled. Automobile accidents, respiratory diseases, victims of violence, childbirth, fire calls, sporting accidents and numerous other cases of disease or injuries to individuals put them at risk of exposure to communicable diseases.

Use of universal precautions against the transmission of diseases for health professionals cannot be relied upon at an emergency scene where situations can change in an instant or where sharp uncontrollable scenes can cause a breach in protective clothing. All the correct planning and precautions are not enough to protect state and local police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians when lives are on the line.

I want to applaud the leadership and members of this committee for holding this public hearing today and if there are any questions I would be happy to address them.

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