



*Testimony of Jim Vigue
Connecticut Employees Union Ind., SEIU Local 511
Regarding Governor's Bill No. 829*

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Jim Vigue and I am the Political Director for Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511 which represents approximately 4500 State employees in the Maintenance and Service Bargaining Unit.

RON McLELLAN
President

MICHAEL GRIFFIN
Vice President

LESLIE MADDOCKS
Secretary-Treasurer

I am here today to testify in strong opposition to Governor's Bill No. 829 -AN ACT CONCERNING PERSONNEL MATTERS. This legislation is nothing more than a thinly veiled method to eradicate the standards of living for the hardworking employees of the State of Connecticut by eroding the Collective Bargaining process. Not only is this a direct attack on the standard of living, but it is also a slap in the face to the employees who provide vital public services to the citizens of Connecticut. It is a disgrace that at a time when public services are in such critical need, that the Governor would seek these changes!

CEUI has represented Maintenance and Service employees for the State of Connecticut for over 40 years. These employees plow snow, maintain the highways, maintain college campuses, and much more. These same employees have had to fight for every increase in their paycheck, fight for fair working conditions, and fight for contract language changes in order to keep them safe at work. And it is true- many of these fights have been played out via the interest arbitration process. However, the interest arbitration process has been invoked so often because the State, as an employer, chooses to overlook the needs of its own employees and refuses to engage in true negotiations over matters that are crucial to its workforce.



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CEUI, like other bargaining units in the State of Connecticut, represents members of the working class in Connecticut. Our members are not high end stock brokers or million dollar homeowners. Rather they are middle class citizens who aspire to own their own home, support their families, and be able to plan for their future. These members, in their pursuit of such basic goals, are therefore vital to the Connecticut economy. The proposed legislation would quickly erode these member's ability to partake in and support the State economy and would ultimately further erode the State's overall economic outlook.

The various labor organizations in Connecticut, CEUI included, are not blind to the current budget dilemmas faced by the State. Nor are they unwilling to discuss ways in which they can be part of the overall solution to resolve the budget crisis. They are however unwilling to be THE solution. The hardworking employees being targeted by the Governor with this insulting legislation before us today did not create this budget hole. Nor are these employees lacking work to do-in fact they have for many years now been asked to do more with less. Now they are being asked to do more with less without any foreseeable relief in sight. This is unacceptable.

Despite the claims that proposed legislation such as the one at hand is needed in order to aid balancing the State budget, do not be fooled. The Governor and her staff are seeking to use this budget crisis to eradicate the rights of the working class in Connecticut and inflict as much pain as possible, rather than deal with the real economic crisis-revenue shortfalls! Her scare tactic will not work.

When did we get to a point where supporting hard working citizens became unpopular? When did we get to the point where high income individuals were put on a pedestal, but the individual making that pedestal is scorned for speaking up for his/her rights? When did we get to a point where employees who take care of the State's

disabled citizens or motoring public became second-class citizens who aren't entitled to fight for wages and benefits due to them? Governor Rell should be ashamed of her treatment of her employees and her obvious disdain for the work they do on a daily basis.

This is the time to reach out to the hardworking families in Connecticut to help them, rather than hurt them. Do not blame these workers for the State's own deficiencies because doing so will only create more problems and despair within our State

For all these reasons, I encourage this committee to vote down the proposed legislation and rather encourage this administration to move toward a more fair and equitable treatment of its workers.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jim Vigue