

Connecticut
State Police Union

Good afternoon, Chairman Ryan, Chairwoman Prague, and Distinguished Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

My name is Steven Rief, and I am President of the Connecticut State Police Union. I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today. I am here to speak in OPPOSITION of:

PROPOSED BILL NO. 6333
AN ACT CONCERNING THE COLLECTION OF EMPLOYEE DNA

I would like to start my testimony by stating that I am a Connecticut State Trooper. I have served the state in this capacity for nearly 20 years. I have served the past 13 years in Eastern District Major Crime. As Union President I represent approximately 1160 State Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants.

The advances in law enforcement and forensic sciences have improved greatly in recent years. Forensic sciences have brought our society to the point where talking about DNA is common place. These advances, along with improved investigative and evidence collection procedures, has enabled law enforcement to apprehend, try and convict individuals on DNA and evidence that at one time was not possible. There is a most compelling need to protect our citizens, apprehending those in society that commit crimes against persons or property.

The bill proposed before this committee is seeking changes within state statute, specifically CGS 46a-60(a)(11). Presently it is a discriminatory employment practice for an employer, and others, *to request or require genetic information from an employee, person seeking employment or member, or to discharge, expel or otherwise discriminate against any person on the basis of genetic material.* There are a number of concerns with the proposed bill and subsequent changes to this statute. The proposed language would allow state or local law enforcement agencies, the Department of Public Safety or the Division of Scientific Services to request and require employees to provide genetic information for the purpose of detecting contamination of samples examined by the Department of Public Safety Division of Scientific Services. There are concerns regarding collective bargaining rights, civil rights, and protections under the Federal and State Constitutions to name a few. Additionally, there are concerns about: development of policies, establishment of a new or different database, how the samples would be collected, when and how would they be processed, how and when they would be queried and by whom, and how long they would be retained. In fact, as the proposed language is currently written it would allow law enforcement to go to employees outside of law enforcement to obtain samples.

Our Federal and State Courts have long upheld the rights afforded to citizens of the United States. These rights are equal to all, regardless of one's employment or socio-economic background or status. The rights of law enforcement officers are not diminished because of their chosen profession. While the need to apprehend perpetrators of crimes is compelling, the individual rights of those sworn to uphold the law should not be ignored. I offer that law enforcement already has the ability to obtain search and seizure warrants, through the criminal courts, to address specific cases where elimination of suspects is warranted.

In closing, my law enforcement colleagues and I recognize the need to apprehend criminals. The ability to identify evidentiary samples that have been inadvertently contaminated by law enforcement personnel or others and thereby eliminating those DNA source contributors as potential suspects is compelling. So are the rights of citizens. I am here today to protect our rights, and I am willingly to work with this committee and others to address the areas of concern mentioned in my testimony today.

CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION
Steven Rief, President

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