

**TESTIMONY**  
**OF THE**  
**CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES**  
**TO THE**  
**LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE**

February 25, 2010

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 90% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to testify before this joint committee on issues of concern to towns and cities.

**SB 168 "An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation and a Police Officer's Use of Deadly Force on an Animal"**

SB 168 would mandate new workers' compensation coverage for all police officers who, in the line of duty, are involved in the death of an animal – regardless of whether there is (1) any physical injury to such police officers, and (2) any attempt by the animal to cause serious injury or death through the use of deadly force.

**CCM opposes SB 168 as a new, unfunded state mandated on towns and cities.**

Local police officers are valued public servants. Their dedication and service to our communities is not at issue. What is at question is whether Connecticut's workers' compensation system should be mandated to provide benefits for mental or emotional impairment due to a police officer's "interaction with an animal."

*The present law is reasonable and should not be changed because of a highly publicized, tragic event.*

CCM opposes SB 168 for the following reasons:

- **SB 168 would be a costly, unfunded mandate on towns and cities** – as noted by OFA in similar proposals from years past **the costs of just one emotional stress case could be significant**. Adding a highly subjective, unfunded mandate to already constrained local budgets would do great harm.
- If enacted, SB 168 would be "applicable to any claim pending on or filed on or after [SB 168 becomes law]". We do not know how many cases this could effect – it could create an enormous, costly liability for some towns and cities. Currently rejected claims that may be under appeal would be considered "pending" – thus, forcing added costs on local budgets – all at taxpayers' expense.

- **Towns and cities already offer health insurance, disability leaves and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to employees suffering from mental or emotional impairments.** These existing benefits provide that police officers and other employees will receive counseling, therapy, and other essential services to assist them and their families during difficult periods. **This bill would unnecessarily and inappropriately create a new, costly special benefit. In fact, in the case that has sparked this legislation, the police officer did receive medical and therapy coverage from his employing municipality;**
- **SB 168 is over-broad and unclear.** The bill would allow police officers to receive workers' compensation benefits due to such officer's "interaction" with any animal, provided officers "reasonably" believed they were in danger. Law enforcement officials are often called upon to investigate animal issues ranging from rabid wild animals to domestic animals that have escaped enclosures. The ambiguous threshold drafted in SB 168 could cover countless encounters with any species – be it dogs, mountain lions, chimpanzees, bears, raccoons, bats, etc..

The policy and cost **implications of SB 168 should be carefully weighed. Changes to the entire workers' compensation system – as a result of an individual case – should not be the basis of any statewide public policy.**

CCM respectfully urges the Committee to **take no action on SB 168.**



If you have any questions, please call Bob Labanara or Ron Thomas of CCM at (203) 498-3000