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Good Afternoon

My name is Margaret Hansen and I reside in New London. I am here today to speak in opposition of Raised Bill number 168; AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS COMPENSATION AND A POLICE OFFICER'S USE OF DEADLY FORCE ON AN ANIMAL.

In 1998 I was employed by First Step Inc., as a mental health case manager. The program I worked out of was in Groton and was continually arguing over safety. Budget cuts had just taken place and John Rowland requested a sum of money to be returned to the State in response to the cuts which had just been handed down.

It was shortly after this that we hired a new executive director who explained to us his intention for changes within the agency. At that time he wanted to expand and have another supported apartment program in New London; although we thought this was a good idea we all asked how we were going to get the funds in order to support this. At one point we had a meeting and some of my co-workers specifically asked if one of us were injured how would this be handled and Mr. MacGregor assured us that we had insurance for this and in addition to our insurance we had an extra umbrella policy to cover things that were not covered and to provide the maximum amount of coverage for the employee. Three letters were submitted to him in opposition of this facility opening up and he had a meeting with me to discuss my concerns. I stated to him that as the one of the senior members of the safety committee I felt extremely concerned and unsettled over his idea to open the facility and the answers which he provided to some of my co-workers. I then called the department of labor along with OSHA with my concerns and was told that until something happened there was nothing that they could do to assist us with the changes in staffing.

In September of 1998 a client was admitted to our respite program and it was listed on our paperwork that he was being discharged from Pond House and awaiting an opening at CVH. In the interim he was to stay at our respite program throughout the weekend until we could get his electricity turned on and then return him to his apartment on Monday.

After the weekend, I was monitoring the medications for the clients and noticed that Adrian was pacing the floor and making statements such as people have to pay for their actions and asking me if I agreed with him. I contacted my supervisor and told her that I did not feel comfortable releasing him back to

his apartment without understanding who or what he was talking about. My supervisor agreed and told me that he needed to be evaluated for a day program anyway and then I could return him back to our program and moved into our 24-hour supervised setting until an opening was available for him at Connecticut Valley Hospital.

A staff person came to transfer Adrian to his appointment but left him unattended at the day program. It was at this location that Adrian became upset and left the building, we were then unable to locate him to return him to our Groton program for supervision. I contacted all of our locations and told them to look out for him and if found return him to Groton.

The following morning when I reported to work at 8am I asked if anyone had found Adrian. It was during shift changeover that I received a phone call from New London telling me that Adrian was at the New London facility and that he had just murdered Donna and in attempts to maintain safety the police had to shoot and kill Adrian. It was at that very moment my life was shattered, I felt frozen in time and had a sudden very cold split go through my entire being. I knew from that moment that my life as I had known it was never to be the same again.

I attempted to return to work, but after a period of one year I had a major breakdown. The nightmares and the amount of guilt which I carried over this situation was more than I could handle. I reported to work one morning and met with our human resource employee to discuss my situation. I was told that the best they could do is place me out on FMLA and see if I could get counseling and return after I was feeling better. I explained to them that this is not something which is something I could possibly get over. It has been eleven years and to this very day this is the first thing I think of when I get up in the morning and it is the last thing I think of at night. Then the dreams take over and the nightmares relive this event only giving strength to the amount of guilt which I feel.

I filed a workers compensation claim for my injuries and was denied due to the changes in the law since 1993. I have fought for assistance over this matter for the last ten years. I had to cash in my retirement account to pay for my counseling and visits to the psychiatrist. I explained relentlessly that not only does the fact that my injuries were not compensable by workers comp, the mere fact that a job which was created to work with people with serious mental health issues and is funded by my tax dollars does not provide coverage for myself and my co-workers in a time of need.

One of my co-workers as a result of this situation can not maintain employment and has no insurance. As a result she has to decide which medications she can afford and has depression and suicidal issues all directly related to this incident. I would like to reiterate that all of us that were at this job and no longer their due to this situation left because we were emotionally and physically forced to leave. It is not easy to get up one day and decide that you are going to quit your job, especially when it is a job which you loved and provided you with such purpose in your life.

Since this tragedy, I have lost my ability to maintain control over my emotions. I lost my daily routine of getting up and going to work. Friends and co-workers have moved on and I remain locked in a world of my own in 1998.

Three years ago, my daughter was working in the social service field and a client had threatened her. At the time she was pregnant and we reported these threats to her agency. Attempts to try to resolve the issue was unsuccessful and when she was eight months into her pregnancy I told her she needed to go out on maternity leave early. I learned the true meaning of safety first and now was haunted by seeing things happen which if ignored could lead to a potentially dangerous outcome. My daughter went out on her maternity leave and was told that when she returned to work after the baby was born this individual would be relocated to another house. When my daughter returned from her leave this individual was still at the home and she brought this to the attention of her manager so provisions were made for him to receive a one on one staff. I explained that this was still not going to ensure her safety. Shortly after her return and prior to her learning that again she was now expecting another baby this individual attacked her. It took three employees to get him off of her but not before doing damages to her. My grandson is now three months old and she remains out on workers comp pending surgery to repair the injuries to her leg which she sustained in the attack.

This year I had to find a new therapist as my therapist was no longer going to be in private practice. I started therapy with a doctor in New London in conjunction with my psychiatrist. We spoke at length over my issues and I told him that the one main problem that I have is I no longer trust. At the time that I worked at First Step I was told that my client was waiting for electricity to be turned on, then when I was called down to the New London office to speak to the police officers I was asked when was I made aware of the threats made to Donna from my client. At no point was I ever informed of any threats made to anyone, let alone my co-worker. The feeling of violation by not being given this vital piece of information which may have led to a different outcome haunts me to this very day. Shortly after starting with this new doctor I read in the New London Day that the therapist which I was seeing was on probation for sexual misconduct and violation of the rules of confidentiality. He was on probation and his records are reviewed on a regular basis to make sure he does not harm any other patient. When I read this article, again I felt violated. I felt that at the time of me signing my HIPPA forms for him that it should have been divulged that he was on probation and was having his records monitored.

Now I come before you after learning that medical bills were paid on behalf of the police officer who shot the chimpanzee. I feel for this gentleman in the capacity of which I now suffer, but on the same grounds I now have to ask why was special consideration given to this individual that was not afforded to myself and the co-workers I worked with who are now unable to function as a result of that September day. I totally oppose the bill as it stands whereby it affects only the police officers. We are now living in a society of mentally ill people without hospitals, prison crowding resulting in early release and ankle bracelet times, homeless people, veterans coming home with serious PTSD who at times are unfamiliar with their surroundings. I believe these changes are necessary but they are necessary for all tax payers who work in jobs that place them in a higher risk factor for such injuries. What about the paramedics, EMT'S, the staff at the emergency rooms, the outreach workers, the workers at the homeless shelters and the food centers. We all need to be valued, after all being an American means we are all equal, does that not mean in the eyes protection and benefits. We all want to do a good job, I did not choose to live my life in this manner, but this is where I am right now. Again, I ask for your assistance in obtaining benefits for the challenges which I met. When the economy fell I was hit again. I

still have bills to pay and grandchildren to care for. Am I any less deserving of the benefits I was not only assured by my executive director I had, but also benefits for which my taxes are paying for. President Obama was elected with his ideas of change. Again, I am asking you to change your position and provide the benefits and protections for me to be able to maintain my family the way that you are able to provide for yours.